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**Becoming and being 'people like us':
a study of students who experience difficulties with literacy
in National Curriculum History at Key Stage 3**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the regulations for the award of Doctor of
Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

My study considers a group of students who experience difficulties with literacy and investigates the factors, at the levels of the social order, the arena of school and the settings within it, which either fostered or hindered their participation and therefore their learning in the history classroom at Key Stage 3. My research is set within a sociocultural framework which emphasises the importance of collaborative learning and considers that factors, not only within settings in the classroom but also those outside, impact on participation and contribute to the construction of identity. A sociocultural framework invites certain research tools such as case studies and comparative methods.

I undertook a study at two different levels, that of the Humanities Faculty but also of each student. This took the form of a longitudinal study over a two year period when the students were in mixed ability groupings in Year 8 and setted groupings in Year 9. I undertook the study in this way to investigate not only the moment by moment interpersonal action, but also the development of identity over time. Methods used on the research in both years included questionnaires, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews using a projective technique 'Talking Stones' to provide rich data on interpersonal interaction and intrapersonal reflections on this.

The study indicated that factors which affect participation and learning are multilayered and difficult to separate. These factors include financial factors at government level outside the arena of school, the demands of the curriculum as imposed from outside and how it is interpreted within the arena of school, pedagogy and practice of teachers, the attitude of peers in the classroom and wider arena of school and the sources of a subject (in this case History) to which the students are exposed outside school.

PART ONE

In the first part of this thesis I introduce the research, explain my theoretical framework and describe the research methods used. The introduction details my professional background and the rationale for the research. In Chapter 1 I draw on the literature to explain the theoretical framework of the research. In Chapter 2 I again draw on the literature to present the wider political, sociohistorical context for the research. In Chapter 3 I describe the context of the research and explain the research instruments and method used.

INTRODUCTION

‘People go on to change their views, add and develop them, and even adopt quite new ideological models - from the use of their own unfolding experience’ (Clough et al., 2000 p.1)

Twenty- three years of my career were spent teaching History to students in secondary schools and throughout that time I had been fascinated by the reactions of students to the subject. In 1992 in England the Humanities Faculty, in the comprehensive co-educational school in which I was teaching, introduced grouping by ability for the first time in Year 9 for students aged 13-14 who had been taught in mixed ability tutor groups in Years 7 and 8. The rationale for this grouping was based on the students’ ability to engage with the subject of History and their written and oral work in Years 7 and 8. Hitherto I had been a staunch advocate of mixed ability teaching, particularly in Humanities and was initially very resistant to the idea.

However, I agreed, albeit reluctantly, and opted to take the two newly established groups of students who had been assessed as experiencing learning difficulties. The difficulties experienced were predominantly concerned with literacy and some students were on the school’s special educational needs register, having a statement of special educational need. While most students were co-operative, there were others who were considered by some members of staff to have behavioural problems. The students were set in smaller groups, the rationale being to provide opportunities for more individual attention from the teacher. The school had always been considered to be an inclusive school and most subjects with the exception of Mathematics and Science were taught in mixed ability groupings. It was, however, a concern to the Humanities staff that the participation and therefore the learning of some of the students was not meeting the expectations either of the staff or the students. This concern was exacerbated by the framework of accountability imposed by government and into which all schools now had to fit.

By the Spring Term of Year 9 I found that the students in these sets, many of whom I had taught previously in Year 8, were more willing to articulate their views within the new structure. Further they asked more questions, participated more enthusiastically in role play and displayed a greater motivation for, and interest in, the subject of History than had been evident in the mixed ability situation. They had, it seemed, moved from being observers, coerced, on occasions, from the very outer margins of participation, to central players in the classroom. Their written work also improved in both content and presentation, and as the time approached for option choices to be made, fifteen students from a total of thirty-two expressed an interest in following a course of History at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

It was unprecedented in the school that such a high proportion of students with learning difficulties should display this interest in the subject at examination level.¹ Although some students who experienced difficulties with literacy had expressed interest in previous years the majority did not pursue this course due to the high standard of literacy which the subject demanded. Over my career teaching History I had developed a deep concern for these students, who did not take the subject at examination level, but was now seeing that given the right conditions this situation might be altered. Throughout Year 9 the students had become more willing and able to attempt to hypothesise, but because of their problems with literacy the richness of their verbal responses was never fully evident in their written work. I was excited and encouraged by their burgeoning interest in the subject. However, I was very concerned about the nature of the coursework and the two part written examination for GCSE, the first of the GCSE examinations being taken by students aged 16 in 1989. The emphasis on written answers, not only for coursework but also in both papers of the examination, would inevitably disadvantage these students, frustrate them and as a result curtail their

¹ Since 1988 History has been designated a foundation subject up to and including Key Stage 3 and from 1994 an optional subject at Key Stage 4 GCSE. This has resulted in its being seen as a subject with contested status which has implications for funding and for student numbers following the course at examination level.

involvement in the subject and I was reluctant to have their developing excitement in the subject thwarted.

In the past I had questioned the validity of this being the only accepted form of assessment particularly for students who experienced difficulties with literacy but the disquiet I experienced now had a sharper focus, because of the phenomenon of this particular group of students who wished to pursue the subject at exam level. At a deeper level, I was frustrated that the hard work and increasing competence as schooled historians of these students, who had so clearly not only enjoyed the subject but had also progressed, should, through no fault of their own, remain unrecognised. Having considered the syllabi of several exam boards I decided that the Welsh Board Certificate of Education in History might be suitable. The course work for the Certificate, had an outline which, although like World History courses at GCSE, followed the national and international events of the 19th and 20th centuries, had elements which enabled the students to study local History in the context of those events. The final examination concentrated on the national and international History of the 20th century, but most importantly for these students, was oral and recorded onto audiotapes which were then forwarded to the external examiners.

I discussed this possibility with the Head of Faculty and the students, and explained that it was not a GCSE, that the form of assessment was different, and suggested that the students should have preliminary discussions with their parents, who could then consider it further with me at the Year 9 Parents Evening. Of the fifteen sets of parents only one refused to allow his son to follow the Welsh Board syllabus, insisting, despite my recommendations, that his son should follow the GCSE course. Clearly this was his prerogative and we proceeded with the remaining fourteen students. Thirteen of the fourteen students took the final examination. Two levels of pass mark, a straight pass

and a credit were achievable with this examination, depending on the quality of the students' coursework and their responses in the oral examination. Half of the students achieved a credit level and the report from the examination board commented on the high standard of responses from all the students.

My pleasure at these results was linked with a desire to investigate what had caused the alteration in the students' attitudes and achievement. I was sufficiently realistic to suspect that although I had enjoyed a good working relationship with the students, this relationship could not be the only factor which had mediated their learning and the changes in their participation from Year 8. I had many questions which I wanted to address. The students appeared to have enjoyed History more in Year 9 than in Year 8, but had this enjoyment, in fact, simply been more overt in the latter year?

Although I had not at this stage read extensively about socioculturalism, I was aware of the work of Vygotsky and the importance which he attached to the role of social activity in learning. The number of students in each group in Year 9 was between 16 and 20, whereas in Year 8 the students had been in mixed ability classes of 28 or more. Had the smaller class size enabled them to feel more relaxed and confident than had been the case in a mixed ability grouping? Had it encouraged them to interact with each other more and thence engage more with the discourse of the subject and attempt tasks which had hitherto seemed too daunting? Was the self esteem of these students adversely affected by being placed in a group which was acknowledged as being specifically formed for those students labelled as having 'special educational needs'? There had appeared to me to be little noticeable impact on this in the classroom, however, that is not to say that there was none. Additionally I questioned whether the fact that the students were so obviously succeeding mediated any possible negative effects of the setting policy. It seemed that their growing confidence in the classroom enabled them to be more

supportive of each other and they appeared to be developing a sense of belonging in the group. This sense of belonging was reinforced when I took both groups in Year 9 on two very successful field trips. Ball (1981) suggests that activities of this type can be seen as 'critical incidents' which foster cohesion within a group.

I was also interested in how the students were learning. Clearly some elements of the subject were specific to History, vocabulary, dates etc. and I had delivered these using a simple transmission approach. Other facets of the subject, such as empathy and the fact that historical events did not occur in isolation but were linked politically, socially, economically and culturally, and which were demanded not only by the National Curriculum, but also by any worthwhile practice of History, needed different pedagogic strategies. These involved more interactive methods such as discussion and role play. Written work generally followed a pattern with necessary vocabulary given at the beginning of each lesson and tape recorders being used as a tool to enable the students to record their initial ideas and shared thinking. This provided a basis on which they could then build their written work including any historical terms which I had written on the board. I suggested to the students that each set of events in History might be seen broadly as two pictures; the bare facts producing an outline cartoon; with the subtle underlying interwoven features revealed by more detailed consideration of the subject providing the possible richness of a masterpiece. In Year 9 and the subsequent two years while they studied for the exam I began to see the emergence of the process, cited by Bruner, of the students being able to '*lean upon intuitive procedure in the subject*' (Bruner, 1960p.66) as they linked incidents and proffered tentative hypotheses. It was also clear from conversations in the classroom and feedback from parents that discussions about the work took place at home. These developments were satisfying for the students and exciting for me.

The obvious success of the experiment for these students forced me to question many of the conclusions in the current debate. In the context of a move towards inclusion arguments against setting suggested that it denied equality of opportunity for individuals, undermined human rights and impacted negatively on the self esteem of the students, conclusions that hitherto I had accepted and defended. It led me to see that setting, per se, might not be the issue in ensuring equality of opportunities to access curriculum knowledge, but that the learning environments in which the students found themselves, in and out of school, might be influential. The characteristics of these environments that might be influential in my view included not only the size and educational mix of the group, but also the methods of teaching and the relationships of students with each other and with the teacher. A further potential influence was the existing and developing knowledge which the students brought to the subject from groups beyond the school community.

Neither time nor resources were available to investigate the reasons for the success of this group and, additionally, the students had left the school and were not accessible. The experiment had been a success at least for these students, but timetable constraints resulted in the trial being suspended. Two years later, with some reorganisation, the decision was taken to reintroduce the system. I had left the school, but was interested in the results of this venture. The success was repeated in 1998 and 1999, at least with the students with learning difficulties. However, staff expressed reservations about two possible effects for the more able students. One of these concerns echoed the findings of research by Boaler (1997) which suggests that some of the more able students in particular girls, experienced the pace in high sets as detrimental to their need to develop understanding in mathematics or History in this case. Secondly, staff at the school under consideration in the present study felt that some of the most able students became complacent about their achievements and the quality of their work suffered.

The decision was made, therefore, that for the academic year 2000 to 2001 only those students who experienced learning difficulties would be placed in a setted situation (Foundation group) for Year 9, while the remaining students would continue to be taught in mixed ability tutor groups. The Humanities department was enthusiastic when I approached them with the proposal for this research. I was aware that there was a possibility that the outcomes could be very different. These were different students, with different staff and a different organisational structure. However, I wanted to find out if being setted (grouped by ability) and labelled as in 'need' did have a negative impact on individual students. If so, what the sources of this impact were and, if the converse occurred, what aspects of the learning environment and the students' experiences and ways of being outside and inside school mediated their learning to positive effect. My research study is therefore an investigation of National Curriculum History in England as experienced by a group of students, who have been identified as experiencing difficulties with literacy and have statements of special educational need, moving from mixed ability grouping in Year 8 to ability grouping in Year 9 i.e. students aged 12 to 14 and the influences and relationships with family, peers and teachers which impact on their experiences, participation and learning.

This research is approached from the perspective of a researcher whose original professional roots were planted very firmly as a practitioner in the classroom. It has been important to me to acknowledge and celebrate my own values, history and experiences and their interacting influences, for these experiences and those of my students were the very tinder which first ignited my interest in the doing this research. Bines (1995) suggests that these experiences and values are of such salience that not only the research topic but methods and outcomes may be affected. I have therefore adopted a critical approach to the theoretical framework used in the research to ensure its

relevance with reference to my own experiences and those of the teachers and students. I have adopted a broadly sociocultural approach with its emphasis on the relational nature of mind, learning and knowledge, and therefore the ideas and work which I drew on most extensively at the beginning were those of Vygotsky (Daniels, 1996) (Emerson, 1996), Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger(1998), Wertsch (1995) and Rogoff (1990, 1995, 1999).

However, as the research progressed I discovered the work of Griffiths (1993, 1995, 1998, 2005) which significantly extended the initial base from which I was working and enriched the ways in which I analysed my data, taking account of the notions of socio-political structures of power, embodied relationships and diversity when considering communities of learners and the participatory experiences within them. The philosophies espoused by Noddings, (1992) that care should be evident in all dealings by individuals with those with whom they come into contact and also the environment generally, resonated with my Christian beliefs, influenced my evolving approach and proved complementary to a sociocultural perspective.

While the students in this study experience difficulties with literacy their resulting problems are not uniform. In this research I use a sociocultural approach which anticipates individual differences across contexts and gives equal emphasis to social and individual aspects, neither of which can be separated from the other, when considering the experiences of these students in the context of their learning in the classroom and at a wider school level. Because this is a small scale study the results may not lend themselves to generalisation. Additionally, their stories in other subjects may be different. However, the perceptions of this group of students may well have resonance for students who experience similar problems. I do not expect the research to provide answers to these problems. I anticipate that it will furnish an insight and illumination,

for other researchers and teachers, into what has been a hitherto under-researched area, providing a basis for further research and possible improvement in students' experience in schools.

CHAPTER 1

A sociocultural approach to learning difficulties

‘Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do it is an experience of identity’ (Wenger, 1998 p.215)

In this chapter I intend to explore the issue of the practice of grouping by ability in the context of the models used to characterise and analyse practice in the special educational needs field over time. In this exploration I am relating these models to views of mind in educational research more generally to highlight why the practice of grouping by ability is advocated by some educators and denounced by others.

My experience with the students in the experiment with grouping by ability brought the way that I had taught and organized my classroom into sharper focus and forced me to step back and reconsider my own theories of learning. My training as an historian had always encouraged me to consider any event in History such as The First World War or Hitler’s rise to power in the 1920s and 30s as being irrevocably set within the political, cultural, social and economic conditions surrounding it. The underlying causes of events were multi-faceted and never simple. I had always found this approach to the teaching of History enriching. The comments of my students had led me to believe that this was also the case for them. When considering my theories of learning I realised that I had not confined this multi-faceted approach to the subject matter in the classroom. I had intuitively considered the experiences of the students outside the classroom and what they brought into the classroom from these experiences as being of major importance to what happened within my lessons and how the students reacted. This consideration deepened inevitably as the time that I taught at the school lengthened and I taught the sisters and brothers of older students and eventually the offspring of earlier students. I had always considered myself to be a ‘reflective practitioner’(Schon, 1983), but it was not until I decided to undertake a PhD that I realized the value of investigating the theory

of learning which supported socioculturalism and applying this framework to my research. This led to much retrospective analysis about my practice and the key factors which were successful with all my students but particularly with those who experienced difficulties in a classroom situation.

As I investigated the ideas espoused in sociocultural theory and read the work of its proponents, particularly Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger, Wertsch *et al.*, and Rogoff, I realised that this theoretical structure had always been the framework which had underpinned my practice and within which I had taught without having a conscious awareness of it. As Wenger (1998) argues, '*the relation between practice and theory is always a complex, interactive one... ..practice is not immune to the influence of theory*' (p.98). I became aware on reflection that the relationship between the theory which supported my practice and the practice itself had been dynamic and, now that I was undertaking a PhD, my practice was now informing my theory.

This combination was now compelling a more discriminating reflection on the notion of abilities as being innate and of a fixed nature. It also made necessary a reconsideration of theories of knowledge, learning and mind, such as those encompassed by the computational or symbol-processing framework which considers the individual and the society of which they are a part as being separate entities. Additionally, I developed a greater critical awareness of the social model of disability and the extensive influence that the above theories had exerted, and continue to exert on education. As the research continued my framework evolved due to the influence of the work of Griffiths and her views on the importance of belonging and the feminist perspective on communities of practice, and that of Noddings and the importance of care for each individual. The theoretical framework in which I was to set my research was established. Before

detailing my theoretical framework it is appropriate at this stage to consider the views of mind which I chose to reject.

1.1 A symbol-processing view of mind and theorising about special education

Different models or ways of looking at learners have had considerable impact on the initiatives which have been introduced into the arena of school and thence into classroom settings, none more so than the public debates and policies surrounding the education of those students who have special educational needs. Lewis (1998) argues that the most influential of these have been those which are products of the old Newtonian/Mechanistic positivist paradigm which views the world in terms of a mechanical metaphor. The methodology of this,

'is reductionist fragmenting the world into small understandable parts while minimizing the contribution of individual accounts (mere anecdote)...searching for ever more objectivity'

(Lewis, 1998 p.93)

Bredo (1999) suggests that rather than being one theoretical framework this approach is in fact a broad positioning within which there are significant differences in how mind is understood and therefore learning and the nature of knowledge. All of the approaches are based on a notion that mind and body are distinct, separate and oppositional as are language and reality and individual and society. Because individual and society are considered to be totally separate entities there is understood to be objective external knowledge which is seen to be *'an integral, self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situations in which it is learned and used'* (Brown *et al.*, 1989 p.32) and which can be acquired through transmission to the student (Bredo, 1999; Putnam *et al.*, 2000). Processes of thinking and learning are seen to be individualistic with little importance accorded to external social and cultural influences. The power structure is

clearly defined with teachers as possessors and distributors of knowledge while students are passive receptors (Freire, 1989). The knowledge to be acquired is:

'represented as a body of atomistic parts. Children's prior knowledge is built on but not seen to play a part in determining how new knowledge is acquired and therefore what new knowledge is acquired. Prior knowledge is established in order to determine what next to 'tell' the learner'

(Murphy *et al.*, 2000 p.8-9).

It also follows from the view that language mirrors reality and cognition is not influenced by environment, and that information given and tasks assigned will be interpreted by all learners in the same way. Further, that what is learned in this way can be assessed by standardized tests whose tasks are assumed to be stable across learners and any results interpreted in relation to cognition only and not experience (Bredo, 1999). Sfard (1998) argues that the term 'acquisition' may be used to describe this view of knowledge seeing the *'human mind as a container to be filled with certain materials and about the learner as becoming an owner of these materials'* (p.5). Sfard (1998) also considers that the implications of this metaphor are that if knowledge is viewed as a commodity to be acquired then, like material wealth, the possession of knowledge becomes a standard by which not only people's identities, but also their social position may be classified with those individuals who have it or have the means to acquire it being considered superior to those who do not have it or cannot acquire it.

'The gifts and potentials, like other private possessions, are believed to be measurable and may therefore be used for sorting people into categories'

(Sfard, 1998 p.8).

The idea of 'normal' ability became widely accepted as a social construction of human ability through the work of Francis Galton and his conception of intelligence which

argued that talents or abilities were gifts with which individuals were endowed at birth, but which could not be acquired (Murphy *et al.*, 1999). These 'talents' were distributed throughout a population 'normally' as represented by the Gaussian curve. His ideas became the foundation of mental tests to measure these abilities and to predict future academic achievement. His work and the development of the Gaussian curve is possibly most significant for special education as, by definition, if there are individuals who are assessed as being at the head of the curve there will be others who are positioned at the tail. The view of mind as brain i.e. biology, which sees intelligence as fixed and predictive of future performance, presumes stability across contexts. This resonates with a symbol-processing view of mind where the thought processes of individuals are seen to be separate from the influences of the societies of which they are members and, as Sfard (2006) notes, leads to assumptions about '*the invariability of learning processes across different contexts*' (p.156). Implicit within this theoretical perspective on mind and cognition is the notion not only of a hierarchy of abilities, but also a hierarchy of those individuals who either do or do not possess the requisite abilities which any particular culture deems of value (Bruner, 1996). This view leads inevitably to those who do not possess the abilities as being considered to have a deficit.

1.2 The positivist paradigm and special education

The view of mind discussed dominated education practice in the 1950s and, despite being challenged by child-centred approaches in the 1960s, continues to wield considerable influence to this day, particularly in the assumption of a hierarchy of abilities predictive of future performance. Hence, the continuing use and reliance on cognitive ability tests in secondary schooling and in the belief in the reliability of these assessment measures. Models developed in the special education field to characterise needs and the practices to meet them were similarly influenced by this view of mind and have a similar long standing history. The Medical Model of the 1950s, the Psychological Process Model of

the 1960s, the Behavioural Model of the 1970s and the Cognitive Learning Strategies Model of the 1980s (Poplin, 1988) all relied heavily on theories of learning which provided :

'descriptions for the behaviours and aptitudes of ordinary children to act as standards against which one might evaluate the strengths and deficits of exceptional children'

(Lunzer, 1994 p.19)

and allowed those students who were experiencing difficulties to be viewed as lacking the cognitive capacity to receive the knowledge to be transmitted. Any deficit in learning was seen to be fixed firmly within the learner with no notion of mediation being acknowledged, and consequently the effects of instructional contexts were largely ignored. These models operating with a view of a normalised population underpinned how children were viewed and has largely been maintained in special education.

The psycho-medical models all operated on the concept of pathology and a problem of 'dis-ease' or deficit within the student. The corollary to this was that any possibility of success must therefore lie with remedial action being directed solely towards the student, once the diagnosis of specific deficits had been made.

'If a child has condition "x", the diagnosis (derived from scientific understanding of condition "x") leads to intervention practice "y" described as a set of deductive rules'

(Bayliss, 1998 p.63).

This concept of deficit within an individual legitimised the practice of assigning children to special schools to meet their specific needs with specific practices and resources.

Despite challenges to the belief in fixed innate abilities, the notion of a distribution of ability throughout a population persists. It continues to wield considerable influence in education and underpins the continuing use of standardised tests, such as Cognitive

Ability Tests as measures of something pre-existing and such practices in school as grouping learners by ability (Murphy *et al.*, 1999).

However, as Bruner (1996) argues,

'About talent, it is by now obvious that it is more multifaceted than any single score, like an IQ test, could possibly reveal. Not only are there many ways of using mind, many ways of knowing and constructing meanings, but they serve many functions in different situations'

(p.25).

Bruner (1996) also argues that opportunity to develop abilities may also be differentially applied culturally. This, he suggests, is particularly evident in education, which is reflective of *'inarticulate cultural values as well as explicit plans'* (Bruner, 1996 p.27) and that opportunities to develop abilities are not equally available.

1.3 The post positivist paradigm and special education

The 1960s saw the influence of Piagetian theorising on education. Whilst this was taken up in particular ways, in what was termed the progressive child-centred approach to practice, it did challenge one of the principal notions of a symbol-processing view of mind, that is that language is a mirror of reality. Instead it was argued that mind was agentive and individuals constructed meaning from experience. Further challenges grew with the influence of Vygotskian theorising in the 1980s which challenged the belief that individual minds were the primary source of development. In the special education field these general challenges coincided with growing concerns in the field of education about the approach adopted by adherents to those models when dealing with students with special educational needs, particularly about the fixed notion of *'disability of mind and body'* (Riddell, 2002 p.6). In England and Wales the 1970s saw the implementation of comprehensive education which was predicated on equality of opportunities (Dale, 1974) and the rejection of hierarchical provision enshrined in the tripartite system of schools for

the population generally. This drew attention to the schooling of children with special educational needs in relation to equality of educational opportunity and it was against this background that the Warnock Committee was convened in 1974. The establishment of this committee and its subsequent report published in 1978 represented a watershed in the field of special education (Riddell, 2002) and represented the most comprehensive review of special education of the post war years and brought the needs of students with learning difficulties under scrutiny. The recommendations of Warnock are discussed in Chapter 2. This review coincided with the emergence of new models in the field to characterise the nature of special needs and how to address them which were united in their critique of the positivist psycho-medical paradigm and the view of the deficit individual. These models importantly had their genesis in the human rights debate, with its philosophy of the right of every individual to be valued and respected as part of a society without fear of discrimination rather than theoretical debates about views of mind, and drew on sociological theorising rather than psychological or sociocultural theorising. This concern with human rights focused attention on the definition of disability and its nature as a socially reproduced phenomenon. Organisations such as the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation made a clear distinction between the concepts of impairment (limitations of structure or function due to disease or disorder) and 'disability' (limitations in the performance of activities) (Johnston, 1997).

These newer models, within the emerging paradigm, although differing in detail, consider that social processes were at the heart of the production of special needs.

Clark *et al* (1998) suggests that three models can be identified within the post positivist paradigm. These are the:

- the discourse model in which concepts and categories of special need are constructed from the social use of discourses about special needs,

- the structural, social and socio-economic model whereby some groups are seen to be systematically disadvantaged and marginalised by the processes of a capitalist society,
- the organisational model, emerging in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which considers that the existing functioning of social institutions including schools generally generates failure, and special needs provision in schools is the means of managing that failure. However, this provision is viewed as inadequately developed, discriminatory and not responsive to the needs of the students.

The above models may thus be viewed as the antithesis of more reductionist models, which perceive disability as being centred solely within the individual and consequent problems as results of inherent impairment. They can be seen as challenging a symbol-processing view of mind as the individual and the social are not separable. However, social is understood in these models in a very particular way at the level of social systems and structures and the concern is with the process of social reproduction rather than the social mediation of individual learning.

Chappell *et al.* (2001) note this emphasis whilst acknowledging that these social models are powerful tools with which to inform, raise awareness and to call for

'the individual and collective responsibility of all societal members to dismantle disablement, and promote a socially aware, active and inclusive culture'

(p.46).

However, they argue that 'learning difficulty' has not been accorded the same prominence as disability within the literature of the social models. There have been further critiques (Atkinson, 1997) which note the limitations of how social is understood in these models and suggest that consideration of personal experience within the social models would make them more relevant to the lives of disabled people. Others (Finkelstein 1996, cited in Shakespeare *et al* 1997) contest that such inclusion would

simply serve to reduce the impact of the models themselves. While the social models have proved potent political tools contributing to the gains made by the disability movement their focus has insufficiently recognised the importance of *'the subtleties and complexities of lived experience'* (Pinder, 1997 p.301). She suggests that impairment and disability cannot be viewed as being isolated from the variety of an individual's experiences with all its inherent ambiguities.

There is much to be said for the above models within the paradigm. Their impact has seen the movement towards inclusion, with its belief in the value of learning from others, resulting in more mixed ability teaching which was the context in which I taught students who experienced learning difficulties. Certainly there is a tendency for some who operate in the theoretical framework of the medical model to categorise those with learning difficulties solely by means of their deficits, thereby reifying the construct of the difficulty as an objective reality, (Bayliss, 1998) and ignoring or underestimating the need to focus on and emphasise competence and abilities (Chappell *et al.*, 2001; Mittler, 2000). Work continues to be undertaken within the sociologically based traditions described above and this discussion is necessarily limited. However, all share a tendency to ascribe the problems experienced by people with disability, whether adults or students to:

'factors located within the school, or society at large – but the possibility of interaction between factors operating at different levels of analysis tends to be overlooked'

(Skidmore, 1999 p.4).

Clearly injustices must be challenged, and where possible eradicated. However, the wheels of emancipatory action grind very slowly indeed. While the process follows its halting progress, if current problems of individual students are not acknowledged and addressed, we relegate these students not only to the outer perimeters of the school

community, but of society itself. Thus we sentence them to remain dependent on others to interpret the wider cultural world of which they are indeed members, but members whose contribution is muted and often ignored.

'It would be a brave practitioner who refused to intervene in the case of a child diagnosed as dyslexic who viewed such a child as being "different" rather than "deficient" and who did not require the child to be subjected to a curriculum which required reading at its core'

(Bayliss, 1998 p.72).

Additionally little information emerges from these models on the process of learning. While highlighting the social construction of special needs, the process remains at the macro level and leaves the interpersonal unconsidered or considered only peripherally. A theory of learning is implied and learning is assumed to be taking place, but these models cannot help to understand learning at the level of experience between people and at an individual level, and are *'completely inadequate as a theory to explain children's learning development'* (Mittler, 2000 p.105). Applying a sociocultural view of mind and of learning, I argue that these inadequacies can begin to be addressed. Clearly the models of inclusion have strengths when viewed from the Vygotskian view of mind which is premised on the advantages of learning from experienced others. However they can be seen to have a considerable weakness when considered from a more sophisticated and compelling perspective of socioculturalism which emphasises the importance of an individual sense of belonging to a community of practice.

1.4 Sociocultural views of mind and learning and special educational needs

Packer et al. (2000) argue that socioculturalism is based on a non-oppositional ontology with the person viewed *'as an acting being engaged in activity in the world'* where

'learning is ...more basically a process of coming to be, of forging identities in activity in the world' (Lave, 1992 cited in Packer *et al.*, 2000 p.229). Socioculturalism embraces several interpretations but all have their foundations in the work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Vygotsky emphasised the importance of psychological tools and sign mediated activity in the construction of knowledge. He rarely used the term 'sociocultural' to define his theory, preferring instead the term sociohistorical to describe the concept that human actions take place within and are defined by social contexts and historical background (John-Steiner *et al.*, 1996). The aim of the approach is to provide an understanding of the interaction between *'human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other'* (Wertsch *et al.*, 1995 p.3) Wertsch *et al.* (1995) developed their theorising from Vygotskian concepts and argue that 'sociocultural' is a more appropriate term for the theory which has been developed in the West from Vygotsky's ideas.

Individual and social relationships in learning

For Vygotsky the role of social interaction, particularly between child and adult is key to the cultural development of children with each function in the interaction taking place at different stages at individual and social levels. He emphasised that the learning emerging from social relationships is of primary importance with individual learning being derivative of that. Vygotsky argued that there is a difference between a child's achievement when working alone and that when assisted by a more experienced other. The majority of Vygotsky's research concentrated on dyadic or small-group interactions. However, other more recent sociocultural theorists have suggested a much wider interpretation of social interaction. Lave and Wenger (1991), for example, suggest a shift away from the consideration of dyads to that of wider social groupings and the

difference between everyday experiences of individuals and the cultural knowledge embedded in a social context. This provides an analytical framework that takes account of the social order of the social models whilst relating this to lived experience between people. In this research I consider how the relationships which students experience not only with their peers but also with teachers impact on participation and therefore learning.

Explicit within this shift is a move away from the symbol-processing view of mind with its notions of a separated mind and body, language and reality and individual and society. Socioculturalism, following Vygotsky's tenet that collective meaning and individual meaning are interdependent, places an emphasis on distributed cognition (Bruner, 1996; Salomon, 1993; Scribner, 1997) and the existence of mind inseparable from context. Knowledge itself is inseparable from the situations in which it is constructed.

'The activity in which knowledge is developed and employed, it is argued, is not separable from or ancillary to learning and cognition. Rather, it is an integral part of what is learned. Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity. Learning and cognition, it is now possible to argue, are fundamentally situated'

(Brown *et al.*, 1989 p.32).

Unlike the view of knowledge that follows from a symbol-processing view of mind which considers that once information is given understanding can be assessed by standardized tests, adherents who subscribe to a situated view of mind argue that language itself is socially constructed and therefore there may be multiple interpretations of a task. Bredo (1999) cites Newman *et al.* (1989) who suggest that a task must be interpreted before it can be undertaken. In school the interpretation of a task will therefore be mediated by a student's socially organized understanding and the student will respond according to what *they* consider is expected of them. If this does not

coincide with a prescribed framework they may be considered a failure. *'Their performance is not understood in light of potentially different socially organised interpretations of the situation'* (Bredo, 1999 p.32).

Spontaneous or everyday concepts, Vygotsky argued, develop in activities outside the formal learning of a school curriculum, especially those involved in telling stories or imaginative play (John-Steiner *et al.*, 1996). Because of the nature of these activities the learning of everyday concepts is random and often unrelated to other concepts, but Vygotsky argued that they are, nevertheless, rich with meaning extracted from the child's everyday experiences and play an important role in mediating the learning of the second category of concepts (Panofsky *et al.*, 1990). This second category of concepts, Vygotsky considered, are those introduced in more formal situations, such as schooling, the information being presented in a set of organised and related structures and set in hierarchical systems (Daniels, 1996). Vygotsky argued that learning through instruction, is a basic aspect of human intelligence and, when *'properly organised results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning'* (Vygotsky, 1978 p.90) cited in John Steiner *et al.*, (1996 p.198). He acknowledged that there is a continual dynamic between the two sets of concepts and they were not therefore mutually exclusive processes.

Cultural Tools

Knowledge construction is seen by socioculturalists to be dependent upon semiotic mechanisms, such as systems of counting, works of art, concepts, writing, schemes, diagrams, all of which are themselves produced socially and culturally. Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) argue that conceptual knowledge might be regarded as a set of tools which are only understood through repeated use in communities of practitioners who are connected by *'intricate socially constructed webs of belief, which are essential to*

understanding what they do ' (p.33). Neither is learning an activity engaged upon incidentally and at definite prescribed periods, but is:

'as much a part of our human nature as eating or sleeping, that it is both life-sustaining and inevitable and that – given a chance – we are quite good at it'

(Wenger, 1998 p.3).

A key cultural tool referred to as the 'tool of tools' is language (Prawat, 1996) which has particular relevance for my sample of students and I consider their engagement with the written and spoken language of the subject of History and its terms in later chapters.

'Acquisition of linguistic knowledge and acquisition of sociocultural knowledge are interdependent because linguistic knowledge is embedded in and constitutes sociocultural knowledge'

(Roth, 1999 p.13).

Linguistic interaction and the cognitive changes which take place are dynamic and complex (John-Steiner *et al.*, 1996) . Not only are the contexts in which dialogue takes place important, but also the understanding of those contexts by the participants and their ability to negotiate meanings within these contexts (Wenger, 1998). The participants have brought their existing knowledge, experiences and identities to these new contexts. These experiences and identities are *'embedded in a unique structure of personal knowing arrived at through a particular, socially situated learning biography'* (Chang-Wells *et al.*, 1993 p.58). This view of knowledge and learning focuses attention on learning environments. If we agree that learning takes place not only in classrooms, then we must interpret 'learning environment' more widely to include physical, cultural, historical influences together with individual beliefs and what has affected them (Roth, 1999). It follows, therefore, that when we consider subject knowledge such as History we must consider the learning of that subject that is available to students outside school from resources for example such as family, friends and media.

The actions which students undertake and their reactions to their environment are inseparable from the context in which they take place (Rogoff, 1990) and are dynamic and reciprocal. There is an inextricable relationship between human action (external and internal) on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situation in which this action occurs on the other (Wertsch *et al.*, 1995).

'We need to come to an understanding of what cognitions learning environments evoke in the students. Important in coming to understand the dynamics within problem-rich learning environments is the notion of community of practice'

(Roth, 1999 p.16).

1.5 Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998) defines 'practice' as being *'a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action'* (p.5). Griffiths (2005) arguing from a philosophical position states that *'any account of practice must be predicated on epistemology; what practical knowledge is taken to be. It must also be predicated on an understanding of what it is to be a human being,'* (p.2) that is not to operate alone but to be part of the world. Griffiths (2005) cites Burbules and Smeyers (2002) understanding of practice to be one that accords with social theories of learning and which considers practice to be:

'a constellation of learned activities, dispositions and skills. We learn to engage in complex practices through observing or emulating others who are more skilled than we; through our own practice, trial and error; through making mistakes and learning from them; through deliberation and reflection on what we are doing and why; through creatively responding to new and unexpected situations; and so on... We are initiated into a form of life that values these activities and that supports us in enacting them'

(p.251).

Students are participants in a social world where learning takes place in social communities such as families, friendship groups, school clubs, subject classrooms etc. These communities themselves are the results of constantly changing and developing complex social practices, (Packer *et al.*, 2000) and over time construct their own mores, rituals, tools and histories. Communities of practice such as organisations, sports clubs etc., although having their own internal organisations and influences should not be seen as being separated from the outside world or uninfluenced by external events (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger *et al* (2002) suggest that three characteristics are critical when identifying a community of practice and the identities which participants appropriate from them.

These are:

- domain – a shared interest and commitment to it by a group of people,
- community – joint activities and mutual help and discussions about the shared interests,
- practice – shared resources, experiences, tools and methods of approaching problems – *‘in short shared practice’* (p.2).

Crucially the participants are practitioners within the community (Wenger *et al*, 2002). Learning to use the ‘tools’ of communities of practice becomes not only a process of enculturation and a simple acquisition of skills (Brown *et al.* 1989), but also a sense of *“becoming” part of the community*’ (Lave *et al.*, 1999b p.31) and contributing to its practices (Wenger, 1998). It is a movement along a learning trajectory deeper into practice and to more central participation. When viewed from this perspective knowledge is not a once and for all acquisition which remains in our heads *‘waiting passively for situations in which it might prove useful’* (McDermott, 1996 p.282) but a *‘knowing’* (Sfard, 1998). It is what Wenger describes as forms of competence. I feel that this is a most important distinction which should not be ignored or minimised.

Additionally, if we interpret the word 'knowing' as a present participle, rather than as a noun which is what Sfard suggests, there is implicit in this an immediacy which reflects the fluidity of learning and its impact on our identity '*as a lived experience of participation in specific communities.....and (which we) constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives*' (Wenger, 1998). The very fact that Sfard (1998) emphasises the word 'knowing' indicates a shift from the static to the active and '*the permanence of having (knowledge) gives way to the constant flux of doing*' (Sfard, 1998 p.6). For the community itself the learning of its participants and their contributions refine and redefine its practices (Wenger, 1998), with practitioners themselves making a contribution to the developing understanding of other members (Palinscar *et al.*, 1993).

Students are members of whole school communities which are made up of a number of additional smaller communities - tutor groups, peer groups, subject groups, sports teams, orchestra, drama groups etc. In schools students are isolated from the mature practice related to academic subjects, such as mathematicians, for example, or those practitioners like engineers who rely on mathematics in their practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and might therefore be seen as being participants in communities of learners. These learners move deeper into practice, in the case of this research, of becoming competent learners of History. The learning of all students is dependent upon the social interaction they experience with the teacher. For those students who may find difficulty with the specialist discourse of the subject, and for whom the potential of not engaging and thus not understanding is greater, the onus upon the practices of the teacher to enable and extend opportunities for participation is more significant.

Students will bring the experiences and identities from the communities, such as family and peer groups, of which they are members outside school to the communities in school. The quality of their membership of the different communities will not be uniform as they play a more major and central role in some than in others (Lave *et al.*, 1999a). In each community they will occupy a unique place and their identity will be mediated by the view that they construct of their position in that community (Wenger, 1998) and the sense of belonging which they experience within it. The place which is occupied and, therefore, the identity which emerges from this, is not static but is constantly changing, depending on the quality of the participation experienced and the learning which is available to them in each of these communities.

‘Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person’

(Wenger, 1998 p.215).

Wenger (1998) suggests that identities are a *‘nexus of multimembership’* (p.159.). He argues that while we may behave and construct ourselves differently in each of the communities, it is wrong to consider that a person might have multiple identities, because by doing so this would *‘miss all the subtle ways in which our various forms of participation, no matter how distinct, can interact, influence each other and require co-ordination’* (p.159). We take the learning and experiences from our participation in one community and therefore the identity formed in that community to others where our experiences and the learning extended to us may radically alter the identity which we have already appropriated.

‘Taking human action as the focus of analysis, we are able to provide a more coherent account of identity, not as a static, inflexible structure of the self, but as a dynamic dimension or moment in action, that may in fundamental ways change from activity to activity depending on the way, in each activity, the purpose, form, cultural tools and contexts are co-ordinated.’

(Penuel *et al.*, 1995 p.84)

So we might, for example, consider the situation of a student who is someone who experiences difficulties with literacy in subjects such as History where a high proficiency in language is demanded. It is here that the teacher is able to positively or negatively affect the moment by moment construction of the student’s identity in the ways in which they open up practice, structure learning resources and enable participation for the student. However, different communities construct, through their practices, what it is to be a legitimate peripheral participant and what agentive experiences are possible for a student and therefore extend different experiences to them. Thus if a community such as sports learners do not value the ability to write but do value the ability to score goals then the identity extended to the student with difficulties with literacy may be very different from that extended to them in a traditional academic setting. It may, therefore, be more useful to consider the notion of selfhood as being composed of many identities which are attributed from each of the communities both within school and without in which we participate, or do not participate. In this case non-participation is just as powerful a factor in the construction of identity as participation (Wenger, 1998).

The practices and mores of the different communities of which the students are a part will not by their nature be the same, neither may they be even complementary. Their membership and identification with one group and its values may throw into conflict those with which they identify in another. In some communities they may be respected

participants, adept at adhering to the conventions inherent in the frameworks, engaging in extending the practices and culture of the communities and thus affecting the other members (Rogoff, 1995). These nurturing groups which affirm and develop self esteem contrast dramatically with membership of communities of learning where the students' participation may remain marginal because of a lack of competence which itself is always in the public arena (McDermott, 1999). Additionally, membership of some communities such as religious bodies and adherence to their requirements for personal behaviour, while being supportive and contributing to a sense of belonging, may construct an even greater tension when those requirements are placed against a backdrop of a largely secular and often cynical school population. Wenger (1998) argues:

'The work of reconciliation may be the most significant challenge faced by learners who move from one community of practice to another... .. The nexus resulting from reconciliation work is not necessarily harmonious, and the process is not done once and for all. Multimembership may involve ongoing tensions that are never resolved'

(Wenger, 1998 p.160).

The position which Griffiths (2005) adopts extends the analytical perspective on communities and offers an important perspective on participation, when she argues that communities of practice and those participants within them should be viewed from a feminist perspective. This perspective is not solely concerned with gender but allows that *'skin colour, sexuality, disability and age as well as sex is relevant in constraining how a person comes to construct their individual identity'* (p.4.). For me this is a most compelling perspective when considering the students who are the subjects of this research. I argue that the difficulties which they experience with literacy and the resulting roles in which they find themselves positioned in communities of practice in school subjects *'constrain how they construct their individual identities.'* Griffiths

further suggests that when discussing communities of practice, embodied relationships, diversity and socio-political structures of power are particularly pertinent and I argue that that these concepts are appropriate when considering the participatory experiences of the students in this research.

Griffiths (2005) argues that '*the embodied person is embedded in their relationships*' and '*is a particular person in a particular place and time*' and that '*practices, like the human beings who create them, are relational and formed in particular material circumstances.*' (p.6). For the students in this research the relationships, in which they are embedded not only outside school, but also relationships within the communities of learners which they encounter in the arena of school and the reactions of the other participants to the students' particular difficulties, are key to their learning trajectories and thus the transformation of their identities. Socio-political structures of power, Griffiths argues, '*constrain who may belong in any social sphere*' (p.6). I argue that the socio-political structures of power which impact on the students in the arena of school are those:

- imposed by the curriculum and enacted by the teachers and
- exercised by peers which encourage or constrain the legitimate peripheral participation of those students who experience difficulties.

I also argue that these same structures of power within the arena of school and its dynamic settings either enable or curtail the diversity which Griffiths considers should symbolise a community of practice and foster '*a community of learners, rather than a set of novices seeking a single model of expertise,*' (p.7) enabling its participants to belong to and become part of the practice.

The key to learning and transformation of identity (Wenger 1998) can be seen therefore in the processes of participation or non-participation within the communities of practice with which we come into contact. Sfard (1998) argues that:

'participation is almost synonymous with "taking part" and "being a part" and both of these expressions signalize that learning should be viewed as a process of becoming a part of a greater whole'

(p.6).

However, 'taking part' and 'being a part' are not the same and it is here that I wish to consider two notions which I consider to be inextricably linked to learning and the construction of identity. These are:

- legitimate peripheral participation which can itself be empowering or disempowering versus marginality (Lave *et al.*, 1991; Wenger, 1998) or non-legitimated peripheral participation:
- belonging (Goodenow, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Noddings, 1992; Wenger, 1998) and its importance to identity formation and learning.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

In their work on legitimate peripheral participation, Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that their consideration of its application to work in schools is limited because the principles on which organisation in schools is predicated are oppositional to the situated stance on learning which Lave and Wenger adopt. However, they comment that, as an analytical tool for understanding learning, it is legitimate to use the concept because even when a teaching curriculum is imposed, such as that of the subject of History, learning nevertheless occurs as a process of participation. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue:

'Peripherality suggest that there are multiple, varied, more-or less-engaged and – inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. Changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership'

(p.36).

Learning occurs through participation wherever an individual is, although institutions may not recognise the participatory point of view and the practices of some teachers may not enable participation for their students. In this research I am adopting this analytical position and considering teachers' practices from this perspective and their impact on the learning of the students with difficulties with literacy in the school subject of History.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that the concept of legitimate peripheral participation may be seen as a place on a learning trajectory which can lead ultimately to more central participation in a community. They use the notion of apprenticeship with newcomers to the community learning from old timers.

'Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice'

(p.29).

When we, as learners, move forward to full participation we become more at ease with what we are doing in the community. We become 'knowing' about the practices of the community. We are acknowledged as being competent and by our competence experience a sense of belonging in that community. We know how to participate in the discourse of the community, utilise its resources and understand how to be members of

that community (Wenger, 1998). This legitimate peripheral participation then may be seen as empowering (Lave *et al.*, 1991), and our learning in this community transforms our identity in a positive way. Part of our identity is that we belong to that community and have the expectation that we will continue to do so with continuing possibilities for participation.

Griffiths (2005) argues that communities of practice:

'are marked by the diversity, or otherwise, of their membersIt can become a community of learners, rather than a set of novices seeking a single model of expertise. A range of models may develop, comfortably coexisting within a practice'

(p.7).

If we consider communities of practice in a non-school context for a moment we can take for example an amateur dramatic society. As a participant in this community, which offers the diversity which Griffiths argues should mark a community of practice, and which values the role which each participant adopts, we may be perfectly happy to remain as a valued front-of house ticket seller with no desire to ever be part of the cast, in which case the extent of our participation within the society will be satisfactory for us. However, we may have ambitions to eventually have a leading acting role in future productions and consider that the duties we currently undertake are part of a learning trajectory towards that goal. If our participation is then destined to stay at the same level we may then construe our participation, not as being legitimate peripheral participation but as marginalisation, particularly if our aspirations are restricted by the actions of other members of this community. Griffiths (2005) argues that what Lave and Wenger (1998) consider marginalisation may be seen as illegitimate peripheral participation, that is *'not being allowed in'* by members of the community enacting structural power within that community (p.7).

In this research I use the term 'non-legitimated peripheral participation' to signify the position ascribed to students, such as those in this research, whose participation is peripheral but who are not considered to be in a place which is seen to be a legitimate one on the trajectory to more central participation. This position is experienced either because of the lack of opportunities for engaging in the joint activities of the community of learners made available either by teachers or peers, or the lack of recognition by peers that the positioning of students engaged in 'catching up' with practice is legitimate. In circumstances such as these our views of our membership of that community and feelings of belonging to it will change as will our identities to accommodate this (Griffiths, 1995).

Legitimation of participation within a school community does not allow for the diverse competencies suggested by Griffiths (2005). Legitimation of peripheral participation in school is bounded by the notion of a single learning trajectory for each individual leading to competence in each sphere of the curriculum. So while the ticket seller in the example above may continue to be valued for the competence she displays in her present role, and the stage manager is considered significant for her contribution, a student in school is required to be seen to be moving along the learning trajectory not only for Mathematics but also English, Science etc. This is demanding for all students, but particularly problematic for those who experience difficulties and whose non-participation may thus be an agentive choice or one extended to them, either of which could result in marginalisation.

'Whether non-participation becomes peripherality or marginality depends on relations of participation that render non-participation either enabling or problematic'

(Wenger, 1998 p.167).

1.6 Belonging

Goodenow (1992) reminds us that a sense of belonging and acceptance was recognised by Maslow (1962) as being one of the most basic human needs. Evidence from research with street children has indicated that although their material needs are often unsatisfied they have articulated their desire to be cared for and respected as being their first priority (Griffiths, 1995). This need is seen by Noddings (1992) as being so salient that she believes that the most important aim of education should be '*to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable people*' (p.xiv). Each individual needs to experience the rewards of belonging to a social group which supports, cares for and values its members (Goodenow 1992). These groups or communities and the interactions which take place within them by engaging and acknowledging the participants contribute to the formation of the identities of the members (Wenger, 1998).

In this research I argue that belonging is not a straightforward concept and is always mediated by the situations and relationships which an individual encounters. The feelings of belonging which an individual experiences in communities of practice in the workplace, for example, may be based on acceptance and respect from colleagues derived from competence and involvement in the tasks undertaken and, I would suggest, in an ideal situation, as what might be seen as nurturing and support from other members of the community.

Wenger (1998) considers that there are three models of belonging which can foster identification and negotiability, the two elements which he considers work together in identity formation.

'Our identities form in this kind of tension between our investment in various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts.'

(p.188).

These modes of belonging are:

- ‘engagement – active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning,
- imagination – creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience,
- alignment – co-ordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises’ (Wenger, 1998 p.173).

Considering these modes of belonging in communities of learners, where belonging depends on displaying competence, students who experience difficulties with literacy are likely to enjoy few occasions in which they experience them. Gee (1996) argues that communities to which we belong have their own discourses. These discourses include not only language, but an awareness of and adherence to ways of belonging such as attitudes and social identities and appropriateness or otherwise of behaviour. Discourses, he argues are ‘*ways of being “people like us”*’ (Gee, 1996 p.12). This does not mean that a student who experiences difficulties with reading and writing will not enjoy a sense of belonging in any community in school. Rather, that such a student is vulnerable in any subject community in which the majority of other participants are skilled in those discourses which are dependent upon the tools of literacy to which the student has little access. Those participants in that particular community will be ‘people like us’ who are able to use the ‘tool of tools’, language, both written and spoken to engage in the practices of the community, imagine connections between their experiences and the experience in the community and in their imaginings of future possible selves, which are often based on the written word. Once again the importance of the role of the teacher is raised here and her willingness to modify practice to enable students who experience

difficulties to engage and negotiate meaning with the cultural tools of the community, particularly literacy.

If a sense of belonging engendered by competence is not experienced then I argue that an individual will not be satisfied with operating in an insular isolated position, but will inevitably seek this sense of belonging elsewhere from communities, such as those of the family and friendship groups which does not demand competence but instead involves an *'emotional dependence which comes from being part of each other's lives and each other's sense of well-being'* (Griffiths, 1995 p.29). Griffiths (1995) argues that it is impossible to consider an individual as separate from society, *'I is a fragment rather than an atom (I am always part of a "we")'* (p.16). In a later work she cites Arendt (1966 p.301),

'The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality which makes his actions and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life ... (and which) can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love'

(Arendt in Griffiths, 2005 p. 2)

The student who experiences marginalization (Wenger, 1998) or illegitimate peripheral participation (Griffiths, 2005) because of his problematic experiences with literacy will have difficulty in connecting with Wenger's three modes of belonging, and yet may enjoy a different sense of belonging with other 'people like us' who experience the same difficulties in school settings. Griffiths (1995) argues that many of our relationships are not with what she describes as equals. As she explains:

'I am, at various times, a colleague, a neighbour, a customer, a teacher, a tourist, an employer and an employee. I am also a daughter, a step-mother, an aunt, a sister and a cousin. I have chosen none of the individuals who fall into these relationships with me...Therefore the dependencies that we have are not an interdependency of equals, of a free association of equal people, who will stand by each other in mutual support. They are the mutual dependencies of non-equals'

(p.30).

I suggest that for many of the students who do not experience a sense of belonging in any community of practice, which is dependent upon proficiency with the spoken, and more particularly the written word they are considered 'non-equals' by a literate society which adopts learning theories which holds acquisitional views of knowledge (Sfard, 1998). These 'non-equals' may experience mutually dependent relationships with others outside the school community. I am concerned to consider how their sense of belonging in the school community is mediated by mixed ability groupings or being in settings where there are other 'people like us' who experience similar difficulties and whether it is possible in these settings to enact Wenger's three modes of belonging.

Griffiths (1995) argues that *'the experience of belonging or not belonging is essential to the self-identity of the person concerned'* (p.91). In her earlier work Griffiths, (1993) suggests that identity formation is the product of an ongoing autobiography in which the individual plays the central role, but in which others such as parents, colleagues, peers play significant parts. The narrative of the autobiography is determined by the individuals' 'connections' with the other characters, the most significant of these connections being that of belonging. These connections *'are either of love and acceptance, or of resistance and rejection'* (p.307). Griffiths (1993) argues that the issue

of belonging permeates every aspect of an individual's life from childhood through to adulthood with opportunities for acceptance and rejection increasing as access to more relationships increases. Additionally the wider range of relationships may pose problems of acceptance and rejection due to factors which until then had little importance and which the individual can do little to remediate.

'Sometimes there is no choice about rejection or acceptance, whatever the feelings and decisions of the individual concerned. Rejection is total, even if the person makes strenuous efforts to join a group of his or her choice'

(Griffiths, 1995 p. 89).

Valas (Valas, 1999) considers that students with learning difficulties are less accepted by peers and feel lonelier than those students without difficulties as the demand for academic performance increases and they become more aware of individual differences. He argues that this is part of a spiral in which these students lack the positive peer interaction generally enjoyed by others. This leads to restricted opportunities for social conduct and social cognition and further rejection by their peers. Add to this the situation of a strong divergence of beliefs and values between a pupil and the school group to which she is seen to belong and inevitably a feeling of isolation is experienced resulting in a reluctance to attempt overtures for fear of rejection (Newman *et al.*, 2001).

Nespor (1997) suggests that school may be seen '*as an intersection in social space, a knot in a web of practices that stretch into complex systems beginning and ending outside the school*' (p.xiii). Two of the communities which make a major contribution to the identity of adolescents and which may be seen as components of the web of practices are the family and peer groups (DuBois *et al.*, 1998). I argue that it is in these communities that many students experience a sense of belonging which may so often be absent from some subject communities in school. However relationships in either one or even both

of these groups may be problematic for some students and experiences from these will be brought into school settings by the student. I argue, therefore, that the importance of the identities appropriated from family and peer groups should not be minimised when considering what contributes to a student's construction of settings within school.

Belonging in a family

I consider briefly two communities, that of the family and secondly that of peer groups and Wenger's modes of belonging in these contexts. In both of these communities there will be mutual engagement as members of the different communities:

'see each other everyday, talk with each other all the time, exchange information and opinions and very directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine'

(Wenger, 1998 p.75).

Much of the literature on adolescence emanates from USA and research undertaken in a different culture may yield results which are not necessarily applicable in Britain (DuBois *et al.*, 1998). While young people in different countries may follow similar developmental pathways, their distinctive cultural patterns will modify those pathways and relationships with peers and adults (Paterson *et al.*, 1995).

Some young people enjoy stable home backgrounds in which there is consensus on negotiated meanings for both parents and children, while others may be confronted with changes which impact on relationships and therefore identities (Furstenberg, 1990).

Increasing divorce rates have meant that for some there will be shared custody and newly formed families with parents, step-parents and step-siblings with disagreements tending to be concerned with minor matters about everyday living (Noller 1994). Some of these new families will provide a loving and supportive structure which may have been missing

in the young person's original family. Many young people may experience several changes to family structure in a comparatively short space of time, having to adjust to new family networks and establish fresh relationships while striving to maintain the equilibrium of those with absent parents or grandparents (Furstenberg 1990). Part of an individual's identity can be strongly affected by family and identities which had originally been formed in one community of 'people like us,' that is of a traditional family will be reconstructed to incorporate the changes. Family life will be viewed by the young person from a different perspective and the identity of a child from a broken home will be built into their selfhood. The child will no longer be one of 'people like us' from a traditional family structure, but one of 'people like us' who come from broken homes.

While many adolescents cope with these changes satisfactorily, for some young people adjustments of this sort prove difficult at a time when they are undergoing changes both physically and emotionally themselves (Furstenberg 1990). The closeness of a relationship which may have been present with an absent parent may not yet have, or even ever, develop with a step-parent and the low-level disagreements common between parents and adolescents which are normally resolved fairly quickly can result in long-term discord in these circumstances (Steinberg, 1990). For others, living with a single parent may mean a narrowing family world with reduced or no contact with the other parent, usually the father, or the paternal grandparents. A new family structure with step-siblings may mean that the position of the child in the family will alter and thus their identity appropriated from that position will also be affected (Wenger, 1998). This will be a new community. New rituals, mores and practices will develop and therefore there will be different opportunities for participation and learning for all participants. While there may have been a sense of identification and belonging with the original family the new structure could mean that active engagement through negotiation of meaning with

step-parents may prove a long and sometimes difficult process. Adolescence is a time in which the young person faces the conflicting desires of wishing to develop a distinctiveness, a separateness and independence from parents (Harter, 1990) while still relying on the support and connectedness of a supportive relationship with parents. Experiences and identities appropriated from and affected by familial circumstances will not be relegated to remain passively outside the school gates, but will be brought into school by the students actively mediating their lives in the community of school.

The community of peers

Despite the obvious influence of parents, peer groups are also a major component in the life of the adolescent with friendships playing an important role in socialisation and the validation of one's identity (Claes, 1992). Adolescent peers may well be experiencing similar decision making processes, family restructuring, emotional turbulence etc. (Head, 1997). These shared emotions provide a basis for discussions with friends about more personal matters such as views on relationships with the other sex, doubts etc. (Savin-Williams *et al.*, 1990) and shared goals and values (Collins *et al.*, 1994). The opportunity to disclose one's feelings to another person who is considered trustworthy is important (Savin-Williams *et al.*, 1990). Relationships whether established earlier and continuing through adolescence or formed after the transition to secondary school can provide emotional support, particularly when facing difficulties or stress (Shulman, 1993).

The adolescent is exposed to a variety of different peer groups throughout the course of a day in school and in other familial or community settings (Bradford Brown, 1990). Bradford-Brown (1990) asserts that, contrary to a popular belief in the existence of a single peer culture which promotes a conformity amongst young people, there is evidence for the existence of multiple peer cultures and that the term 'peer group' is misleading

because it has tended to refer not only to dyadic interaction with one special friend, but also to small groups, which he identifies as 'cliques' and to larger groups known as crowds. He defines cliques as small groups which, although not necessarily universal in either size or the quality of welcome offered to outsiders, generally foster an interactional understanding and appreciation of all the members helping to maintain close relationships.

Within the category of cliques there are those which are 'activity clique' groups which are formed by virtue of being based around a common activity, but which adolescents would not necessarily initially have joined from choice. These include groups such as study groups at school or duty groups at school camp. It is this group that is particularly pertinent to this research where I consider the interaction between peers in the activity cliques, and the influence of this on the participation, engagement and alignment of those students who experience difficulties with literacy. The second group, that of friendship cliques, comprise a group of peers that the adolescent has chosen for herself and are extremely important in this research for two reasons. First because of the role that is played by such a group in supporting learning and the negotiation of meaning in subject settings: and secondly, the fostering and nurturing of a sense of belonging which is not necessarily based on an individual having been extended an identity of competence.

The influence of these friendship cliques on individuals is strong and the group fosters loyalty amongst its members to the structure and ideals and practices of the group reinforcing conformity and exclusivity within its membership (Head, 1997). In each of these groups different practices and discourses operate (Schwartz, 2003), and *'each discourse incorporates a usually taken for granted and tacit "theory" of what counts as a "normal" person and the "right" ways to think feel and behave'* (Gee, 1996 p.ix), or as

Griffiths (2005) describes practice, '*the way we do things round here*' (p.4). Wenger (1998) argues that there will always be a tension between identification and negotiability and while a young person may identify strongly with the group, because strong discourses operate within it there may be little room for negotiability. Membership of the group will therefore be '*both enabling and limiting of identity; it is both a resource and a cost*' (Wenger, 1998 p.207).

Affiliation to these groups in school is reinforced by '*seating arrangements in the lunchroom, access to various extracurricular activities and invitations to weekend activities*' all of which seek to define '*who belongs to the crowd and who does not*' (Bradford Brown *et al.*, 1987 p.48). Within groups themselves, whether within school or outside, there appears to be a complex and sometimes subtle power dynamic with members holding different functional and geographical positions with prescribed roles (Bradford Brown, 1990; Head, 1997) with some playing major leadership roles while others assume or are assigned subsidiary positions. The identity as a member of the group will be mediated once again by the position adopted by or allowed to the individual and the process by which this decision was taken (Wenger, 1998).

'Crowds' are larger '*"reputation-based" collectives of similarly stereotyped individuals who may or may not spend much time together*' (Bradford Brown, 1990 p.177).

'Crowds' may be labelled by those who are not members of the 'crowd' with names which are seen to reflect interests or qualities of the group under consideration. These ascribed qualities can be influential in areas such as the construction of masculinities (Connell, 1989; Francis, 1999; Younger *et al.*, 1996). Students may not necessarily belong to a 'crowd' but may nevertheless be labelled as having the qualities associated with them. Strong identification with groups can have both positive and negative

consequences. Students who experience difficulties at school and who do not enjoy a sense of belonging to the school community may be drawn to peer groups who do not value educational goals (Goodenow, 1992). Their identification with these communities and ability to negotiate meanings within them may stand in stark contrast to their experiences at school and be a powerful influence in inhibiting learning (Wenger, 1998), while confronting the student with an uncomfortable choice between identities (Schwartz, 2003). *'Once crystallised as a negative or oppositional identity, patterns may become entrenched and increasingly hard to influence or change'* (Goodenow, 1992 p.181).

The opinions of the wider peer community also appear to have a greater impact than those of friends on adolescent self-esteem and identities. This is because close friends are expected to give support and therefore opinions and judgement are not necessarily as exacting or critical (Harter, 1990). Since, in the successful formation of identity, there should be mutuality between an individual's idea of self and that which significant others hold of her (Harter, 1990), it is clear that the opinions of others may be extremely influential. This is very important in the situation of students experiencing difficulties in the classroom. A student who is in a school community where her participation is marginal because of difficulties with literacy will be faced with a lack of engagement on two levels. First, there is the problem of being unable to engage with the tools of the subject such as vocabulary or textbooks. Second, there is the difficulty of not engaging on an equal level or enjoying a sense of belonging with other students who do not experience the same problems and therefore find difficulty in imagining the difficulties or indeed empathising with the student and even enacting power to exclude her.

'It is this dual access to participation and reification that makes engagement a special context for learning and identity. A lack of access to either participation or reification results in the inability to learn'

(Wenger, 1998 p.184).

Lack of diversity in what is considered legitimate evidence of competence further marginalises those students who experience problems with literacy. Apprehension about possible negative reactions from teachers or peers confines them to a position of non-legitimated peripheral participation, curtails their learning and confers on them an identity of incompetence.

'experience becomes irrelevant because it cannot be asserted and recognised as a form of competence.When, in a community of practice, the distinction between the production and adoption of meaning reflects enduring patterns of engagement among members – that is, when some always produce and some always adopt – the local economy of meaning yields very uneven ownership of meaning. This situation, when it persists, results in mutually reinforcing conditions of both marginality and inability to learn'

(Wenger, 1998 p.203).

In this research I consider the extent of the influence which the peer community exert on the opportunities for participation available to students who experience difficulties with literacy in the community of learners in the subject of History. I consider the impact of peer influence, both of closer peer relationships and that of wider groups, such as activity cliques, on the engagement of these students in the negotiation of meaning and their ability to align with the subject. I focus on the role of teachers in opening up practice and enabling participation in a community of learners and, through their practices, extending identities to students that mediate their participation. I also consider the extent

to which teachers appreciate the importance of peers as resources for learning and the formation of a sense of belonging and engagement with the community.

In conclusion, the theoretical stance that I adopt in this work is that it is impossible to separate learning from the communities of practice of which individuals are members and the relationships in which they are embedded in those communities. The learning which is available to individuals, both within each community and outside, and the sense of belonging which they experience in each of the communities in which they are involved, mediates their learning. It also mediates the extent to which their movement into and through practice and along a learning trajectory continues to central participation or remains peripheral either legitimate or non-legitimated. In the following chapter I extend consideration of the individual social relationship by looking more closely at how social is understood in a sociocultural perspective. I consider the arena of school and the influences which impact upon it and thus upon the students and the settings which are enacted and experienced.

CHAPTER 2

A sociocultural approach to context: understanding practice

2.1 Arena and Settings

In this thesis I use the concepts of arena and setting as described by Lave (1988). Lave (1988) considers that arena is '*a physically, economically, politically, and socially organised space-in-time... within which activity takes place*' (p.150) and in which practice occurs and communities emerge. Arena used in such a way is particularly appropriate when considering school. This arena is:

'not negotiable directly by the individual... ..It is outside of, yet encompasses the individual, providing higher-order institutional framework within which setting is constituted' (p.151).

It is not negotiable by the individual as there are enduring practices that are established at arena level such as the wearing of school uniform, attendance at assemblies, signing in attendance which can vary between school arenas. The arena of school, although providing this higher-order framework, should not be seen as an autonomous organisation unaffected by external constraints, but is itself situated and exposed to practices beyond its boundaries (Bruner, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Consequently some practices which are not negotiable might include the requirement to take part in national tests and these are common to many arenas though how each school prepares for and values these may vary.

Setting, Lave (1988) considers, can be '*conceived of as a relation between acting persons and the arenas in relation with which they act*' (p.150). In this thesis I use Lave's (1988) description of arena and incorporate Nespor's (1997) perspective which suggests that school itself is composed of '*intersections in social space, knots in a web of practices that stretch into complex systems beginning and ending outside the school*' (pxiii). I

argue that not only school itself but the settings within it are themselves the '*knots in a web of practices*.' These knots are the '*intersections in social space*' created by the participants and their experiences as they engage in social activity within the arena of school. Settings are emergent and transient and what lingers is the appropriated experiences of individuals. Additionally, I use the concept of community (Wenger 1998) and suggest that this emerges in the intersection between the arena and the setting as experienced by the individual. Experiences over time in subject settings create the community of learners in, for example, History. By investigating the community it is possible to understand the orchestration by the teacher, in the case of this research the practice, which is taking place within that community, and the learning that is made available and to whom. So, for example, in this thesis the community being considered is that of schooled historians which emerges within the arena of the History department and the wider arena of the school.

Lave (1988) uses the idea of a supermarket to describe the notion of arena and settings. This can be especially helpful when reflecting on schools and their organisation, and I illustrate this example briefly before moving on to consider the arena of school and its settings. The arena of the supermarket is '*an institution at the interface between consumers and suppliers of grocery commodities*' (Lave 1988 p.152). The shopper will bring with her an idea of her requirements and will thus individualise her shopping, visiting some of the areas of the supermarket and not others and therefore participating in a setting specific to her, while at the same time creating the setting itself by her participation. Practices within the arena such as the trolleys used, the requirement to pre weigh goods etc. will mediate individual action as will the forms of organisation of the produce. If the commodities or their prices are changed the shopper's purchases, and therefore her activity and settings may well alter as she ignores areas previously frequented and visits others within the arena of the supermarket.

'A setting is generated out of a person's grocery-shopping activity and at the same time generates that activity. In short, activity is dialectically constituted in relation with the setting... ..Any change in the setting within the arena transforms the activity of grocery shopping.....Neither the setting nor the activity exists in realized form, except in relation with the other'

(Lave, 1988 p.151).

The arena, setting and its participants can therefore be seen to be engaged in a continuing dynamic. The significance for school settings is that in the enactment by teachers, tasks as part of the activity of learning a subject, are set and shaped by social structures and arena practices, but are realised in the interactions between students and teachers and are shaped by this in turn. If the theme of the supermarket is continued briefly it can be seen that the organisation of the arena of the supermarket, i.e. the institutional framework is structured not only by policy decisions at board level. These are, in turn, mediated also by the geographical location of each supermarket and the preferences of consumers within that location. Some branches of the larger supermarkets while being seen to be under the umbrella of an overall organisation will inevitably be affected by the market forces of each particular area. Those serving small rural communities, for example, while having certain commodities which are common to most supermarkets will not necessarily be stocking the same additional products as those supermarkets which are situated in larger urban more cosmopolitan areas, thus producing different arenas within which settings are experienced. Lave describes the setting as the context of the activity and the arena of the context of that context.

2.2 The arena of 'school'

The arena of school, like the supermarket, is framed by such factors as the buildings and their maintenance (Mortimore, 1989), its geographical location, the demographic

distribution of its catchment area, and the local economic situation. It is also constituted by other elements. These elements include teachers, students and other staff, the ethos of the school, that is the relationships and practices within it and how its participants are valued, such as the prominence of displays of students' work (Angelides *et al.*, 2000; Battistich *et al.*, 1997; Mortimore, 1989). Like the supermarket the arena of school itself and the activities within it are predicated on notions of what is seen to be necessary for the participants, often dictated by agencies outside the arena of school. So, although there will be common requirements such as the professional conduct of teachers etc., the arena of primary school will be organized very differently from that of secondary school. However, the practices offered by the arena will be edited by the participants individually based on the experiences that they bring into the arena.

Wenger (1998) in his later writing focuses on community rather than Lave's concepts of arena and setting. He suggests that an organisation such as that of school is too large to be viewed as a single community of practice because this view *'would gloss over the discontinuities that are integral to its very structure'* (p.127). He considers that it *'can profitably be viewed as a constellation of interconnected practices'* (p.127). These interconnected practices may have behaviours and rules etc. in common which enable them to be part of the constellation. These may, for example, in the case of a school, be practices enacted in subject faculties or pastoral teams, such as maintaining school discipline, setting homework, taking the register etc. As part of the arena these departments will be *'having members in common or serving a cause or competing for the same resources'* (Wenger 1998 p.127).

Bringing together Wenger's understanding of community and constellations of interconnected practices with Lave's concept of arena and setting and Nespor's conception of setting as *'knots in a web of practices'* I argue that the organisation of

school needs to be understood from two perspectives. On one hand it may be understood as the constellation of practices as suggested by Wenger, but also viewed as an overarching arena, the existence of which legitimates those practices which are interconnected and without which the constellation of communities would not exist. The communities that I examine are those that are part of the 'school' constellation that emerge in the intersections in social space created as teachers and learners act together. The practices of these communities will clearly be influenced by the larger institution, but their *'day to day reality is nevertheless produced by participants within the resources and constraints of their situations'* (Wenger, 1998 p.79). The communities will be involved in a continuing and interdependent dynamic with the arena of school. The contributions of these communities, whether academic, pastoral or recreational, will impact upon and affect the arena of the school producing elements *'that transcend the experience of individuals'* (Lave 1988 p.150).

There are some faculties such as Science, Languages or Humanities, which because of the individual subjects within each faculty, may also be understood as higher order institutional frameworks or arenas with their own smaller communities of practice. These smaller communities or subject areas will each have its own areas of focus, priorities and ways of achieving these (Wenger 1998). In this research the History department which is the focus of this research is, together with the Geography department and Religious Education department, part of the larger Humanities Faculty. Subject teachers, although part of a larger faculty or a pastoral team, will undoubtedly have multiple identities as members of communities within and without school and see their identity as being that of the teacher of a subject while still being members of a faculty which itself is nested within the larger arena.

'A subject defines the territory of a 'department' within each school. The subject is the major reference point in the work of the contemporary secondary school; the

information and knowledge transmitted in schools is formally selected and organized through subjects. The teacher is identified by the students and related to them mainly through his subject specialism'

(Goodson, 1988 p.190).

For the purposes of this research I consider the teachers as enacting settings to enable students to become schooled historians, and consider emergent settings and experiences of them from the perspective of participation within a community and what affects it within the arena of the Humanities Faculty, which is itself set in the overarching arena of the school. I understand and examine learning, therefore, not as just learning about a subject but 'becoming a member' through participation in the community. Hence learners' experiences of 'becoming' and 'belonging' are of equal significance.

2.3 The mediation of practice: influences beyond the arena

Cultural representations emerge from outside the arena of school, yet are brought into the arena of school by staff and students and hence mediate settings. These representations include, for example, what it is to be 'male' (Francis, 1999; Jackson *et al.*, 1996), or how students who experience learning difficulties behave (Boaler *et al.*, 1998). Some key aspects of social structures such as specified educational policies about curriculum content, subject standards and effective pedagogic practices are considered next and their significance for the research study.

Many outside influences will mediate the enduring practices of the arena of school and thence the settings created within it. Ball, (1997) suggests that the influences which impact on schools should be considered as part of a general set of organising principles which govern '*social provision right across the public sector*' (p.258). These principles, he argues, have undergone a

'major transformation.....which involves privatisation, liberalisation and an imposition of commercial criteria' (p.258). Those concerned with education,

'should be seen as primarily located within the policy framework created by the 1988 and subsequent Education Acts (and a variety of other more general legislation) which put into place the infrastructure and incentives of the market form and introduced the "steering" possibilities of performance-related funding and accountability'

(p.259)

The influences which mediate the practices of the arena include national initiatives as mentioned previously such as the specified curriculum and associated assessments such as the Standardised Assessment Tests and General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. The continuing move to what Ball (1997) considers are *'modes of regulation and control which predominate in the private sector'* (p.259) has seen the introduction and publication of school league table and OFSTED inspections. The arena of each individual school is unique, and within this, arena teachers' beliefs about people, learning, pedagogy mediate their implementation of policy initiatives and influence their orchestration of the settings in which they relate to and act with students. Through this shared activity settings are created and experienced.

A teacher who holds deeply held convictions about the advantages of practices arising from a sociocultural stance might anticipate that these could provide some of the answers to the difficulties experienced by some students and further the principles of inclusion. However, implementing these practices and considering the subtleties involved in engaging individual students may well be hindered by the restrictions imposed outside the arena of school by educational legislation, i.e. at the level of the social order. Edwards (2001) argues that the curricular reforms of the last 15 years have served to embed an argument that:

'good teaching is efficient delivery of externally supplied curricular goods. The focus in schools is on front stage performance where slick simplicity is the only option, while the backstage tasks of dealing with the complexities of managing the learning of the students remains invisible'

(Edwards, 2001 p.165).

Teachers may wish to implement practices which they consider would engage the students in authentic learning situations. Some of these practices might however take longer than the time available for a Key Stage 3 programme or a two year GCSE course. They are forced, therefore, to tailor these and engage practices with which they are not entirely comfortable to ensure that the requirements of the curriculum are fulfilled.

Broadfoot (1998) cited in James (2000) argues that:

'External accountability has increased and although personal and moral responsibility was (in the PACE study) still seen as important, there was some evidence of a shift in climate from a covenant based on trust to a contract based on the delivery of education to meet national economic goals rather than as a form of personal development'

(Broadfoot 1998, p.12, cited in James, 2000.p.349)

This has significantly changed the relationship between teachers and the curriculum which they must teach. As Looney (2001) suggests:

'the curriculum has become something for teachers, students and schools to overcome, to manage to conquer. There is little empowerment associated with it'

(p.151)

The extent to which teachers embrace or feel constrained by curriculum policy is significant in understanding what they legitimise through their practice and the identities they extend to students.

National Policy and School Subjects

The specified curriculum emphasises the importance of some subjects such as the core of English, Mathematics and Science while reducing the status of others (Dearing, 1994).

The perception of the status of these subjects will inevitably impact on the practices within the arena of the school affecting the allocation of funding to the faculties. Even before the introduction of the National Curriculum there existed a hierarchy of status between subjects with a link between external subject examinations for the able students and the flow of status and resources (Goodson, 1988). The devolvement of funding through the arena of faculties to individual departments and thence to individual teachers will act as an important mediating factor for staff and students. Paechter (1998) argues that there is a complex power relationship between not only the departments, but also individuals within those departments and that in the past subjects such as Craft Design and Technology and Home Economics may have been '*marginal subjects with little power within the curriculum*' (p.99). Ball (1987) suggests that the power-play within a school may be compared with that of the conflicts between barons in medieval England.

'In the school the concerns and interests of academic and pastoral barons are fundamentally the same; allocations from the budget, both in terms of capitation monies and in relations to appointments, time-table time and control of territory (teaching rooms, offices, special facilities) and influence over school policies'

(p.221).

Humanities as a foundation subject is optional post 14 and as such this might influence approaches to the teaching of students designated as low ability and is therefore worthy of note in the planned study. Students are expected to demonstrate competence through the national standardized tests and embodied within these are representations of what it means to be a good student. These representations identify what knowledge children should have acquired as well as a normalized view of the practices they should be able to

engage in. Hence practices become part of the acquisition of knowledge. Currently the ideal child is perceived at ages 6-7 and 13-14 to be able to participate in certain ways in Science, Mathematics and literacy. These representations are powerful and are brought into the arena by staff and students and hence mediate settings. The nature of many of these representations and the tests which assess the students can be seen to reflect the symbol-processing theory of mind which assumes that all students interpret the information and tasks similarly and therefore can be assessed with universal standardized tests (Bredo, 1999). For students who experience difficulties of any kind with learning, these representations may not accord with either their experiences or even their representations of the tasks on which they are tested and the foundations for failure are already constructed for them

'Behaving as if there were only one interpretation, one descriptive framework, is a possible way of interacting. It is a form of interaction, however, that is likely to make it painful or difficult for others who may have a different interpretation to join "the dance"'

(Bredo, 1999 p.39).

Schooled Literacy

The majority of the secondary school timetable hinges upon the assumption that its participants are proficient at reading and writing to a satisfactory level and will become progressively more fluent in the language and the educational discourse of teaching and learning of the school (Mercer, 1995). In schooled subject communities literacy is the medium for accessing commodity knowledge. In that sense multiple strands of literacy are demanded of students. These include how to use language appropriately through speaking and writing generally, but also in more particular ways as demanded by the discourses of each subject community, the social languages of Gee (1996) as discussed

earlier. Being or not being literate is one of the key areas in school in which a student may become categorised (Sfard, 1998) or labelled as having a deficit (McDermott, 1996).

At the level of the social order policy specifications articulate what constitutes the performances associated with someone who is a reader. The report for the tests for Standards at Key Stage 3 (students aged 12-14 years old) in English in 2002 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002b) stated that analysis had been undertaken on a sample of 359 scripts for evidence of skills such as the ability to;

- *'describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from the passage,*
- *interpret, deduce or infer ideas, eg. character, motive, mood atmosphere,*
- *comment on the structure or the organisation of the text,*
- *comment on the writer's use of language, eg choice of words, syntax, imagery, tone;*
- *comment on the writer's purposes and attitudes, and the reader-writer relationship implied in the text;*
- *use quotation and reference to the text to support ideas'*

(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002b p.5)

In 2003 students were required to show evidence of the ability to;

- *use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to read for meaning;*
- *understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text;*
- *deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts;*
- *identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level;*
- *explain and comment on writers' uses of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level;*

- *identify and comment on writers' uses of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level;*
- *identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader*
- *relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary traditions*

(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002a p.5)

Clearly for students to attain any marks it is necessary for them not only to be readers, but also to have the requisite level of writing or the 'composing process' (Wray, 1994). Additionally, the requirements of tests or examinations demand that tasks are not only completed in a stipulated time but also in conditions which are estranged from those experienced in everyday life where cognition is distributed and where reference could be made to other members of the community (McDermott, 1999). The influence of specifications of literary competence on teachers' practices and on their views and expectations of children with literacy difficulties was a key issue for the planned research.

Schooled History

History as a schooled subject, no less than any other, is affected by factors outside the arena of school. The specified curriculum in the form of National Curriculum History (DES, 1991; DfE, 1995), and what government considers is required by society or what is necessary to be taught to students (Bruner, 1996), impacts on the arena of school and thence to settings within it. National Curriculum History (DfES 1995) states that the subject should be taught in a way that is appropriate to the abilities to '*the great majority of students in the Key Stage*' (p.1). The Programmes of Study for History at Key Stage 3 include the following Common Requirement:

‘Students should be taught to express themselves clearly in both speech and writing and to develop their writing skills. They should be taught to use grammatically correct sentences and to spell and punctuate accurately in order to communicate effectively in written English’

(DfE, 1995 p.1).

The Key Elements of National Curriculum History are that students should have an understanding and grasp of chronology, historical knowledge, interpretations of History, historical enquiry and organisation and communication (DfE, 1995 p.11). Clearly most of this relies on a proficiency in literacy. For example understanding of chronology demands an ability to,

‘use dates, terms and conventions that describe historical periods and the passing of time e.g. era, medieval, Reformation, Industrial Revolution, Hanoverian, Georgian’

(p.11).

while the element of organisation and communication requires students to,

organise their knowledge and understanding of History through the accurate selection and deployment of terms necessary to describe and explain the periods and topics studied, including government, parliament, Church, state, empire, monarchy, republic, treaty, revolution, reform, class nobility, peasantry, law, trade industrialisation, communism, fascism, democracy and dictatorship’

(p.11)

and

‘to communicate their knowledge and understanding of History, using a range of techniques, including extended narratives and descriptions, and substantiated explanations’

(p.11)

As discussed earlier the specified curriculum and its assessments require an ability to deal with abstract terms and concepts (Haydn *et al.*, 1997) and rely '*heavily on handling, understanding and interpreting evidence, much of which is written*' (Curtis *et al.*, 1994 p.169).

Other policies that emerge at the level of the social order and influence practice in arenas and settings include those concerned with the nature of special educational need and how to meet these. In chapter 1 reference was made to one of the most influential of these in recent years, the Warnock Report.

National Policy and special educational needs

The Warnock Report

The Warnock committee, convened in 1974, took a radical step in bringing under consideration the ways in which students with difficulties, either physical or educational had been assessed and treated in the past. Provision for these students had been largely in special schools, but partially in mainstream schools and this provision had been based on eleven categories of handicap. A more positive approach than had been used was advocated and the eleven categories of handicap as defined by the 1944 Education Act were replaced by the term Special Educational Need. This concept was not concerned solely with a child's disability, but

'everything about him (sic) his abilities as well as his disabilities – indeed all the factors which have a bearing on his educational progress.'

(DES, 1978 para 3.6)

However, the social circumstances of students, particularly those outside school and within the home, were largely ignored or deemed to be an unnecessary or even a politically dangerous consideration. Although the committee acknowledged that some children did not '*obtain from their families or their social circumstances the quality of*

stimulation or the sense of stability which is necessary for proper educational progress' (para 1.2), their terms of reference did not include a comprehensive analysis of *'the factors which may lead to educational handicap.'* (para 1.2). Warnock, herself, commented that the parameters within which the committee was allowed to function were seriously misguided.

'Looking back on the days of the committee, when everyone felt that a new world was opening for disadvantaged children, the most strikingly absurd fact is that the committee was forbidden to count social deprivation as in any way contributing to educational needs.....The very idea of such separation now seems preposterous.'

(Warnock 1999 – cited in Clough and Corbett, 2000, p.4)

The parameters in which the committee were permitted to operate resonate strongly with the reservations that Bruner (1996) expressed in his instrumentalism tenet that education by being bounded culturally by the notions of *'power, distinction and rewards'* (p.28) differentiates between the opportunities that are offered to individuals. Using evidence from surveys undertaken in inner London, the Isle of Wight, an infants' school and the National Child Development Study the committee judged that about one in six children at any time and one in five children at some time during their school career would need some special educational help (DES, 1978 para 3.17). A much wider view of special education was envisaged and sought to include help for students who had emotional or behavioural problems and who had hitherto been seen as disruptive, and also for those who had been considered to need 'remedial' education. (para 3.38). The committee considered that the term 'remedial' education was misleading and that the groups receiving this education were far from homogeneous, but that they nevertheless required additional support. They felt that a distinction between remedial and special education was no longer sustainable (para 3.39).

The help provided for these students would fall into the categories of provision of special equipment, resources etc., a modified curriculum or additional consideration given to the *'social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place'* (para 3.19).

The Report was critical of the practice of categorisation of students by the type of disability or disorder which they experienced, and which had been defined in the Handicapped Students and Special Schools Regulations 1959. The committee considered that it had exerted a powerful influence not only on assessment reports but also on educational provision (para 3.21). While acknowledging the concern expressed by some professionals, that categorisation served an important purpose by emphasising the responsibilities of local authorities to provide education suitable for children with special needs, the committee voiced serious reservations over the system as it then existed. These included:

- the fact that the categorisation fixed a single label of handicap on each child:
- the difficulties for those students who experienced more than one disability and subsequent problems of classification:
- confusion between a child's disability and the type of education required:
- the likelihood of there being some children who did not fit into any of the prescribed categories, but nevertheless required some form of special provision.

'labels tend to stick, and children diagnosed as ESN(M) or maladjusted can be stigmatised unnecessarily for the whole of their school careers and beyond'

(para 3.23).

The most important consideration, however, was felt to be the continuation, by the existing system of categorisation, of the view of two distinct groups of children, those with handicap and those without, and the recommendation was made that the existing form of categorisation should be abolished (para 3.25). It was however suggested that a system of recording should be established for those students with severe and complex disabilities or difficulties:

'who, on the basis of a detailed profile of their needs prepared by a multi-professional team, are judged by their local education authority to require special educational provision not generally available in ordinary schools.'

(para 3.31).

This new system, then, introduced a category of children with statemented needs and a larger population with unspecified but recognised needs which could be met by mainstream provision. The system was designed to protect those students with severe and complex disabilities or difficulties, by ensuring the direction of additional financial resources to where it was considered most important. It was not felt necessary to impose formal obligations on local authorities to make arrangements to record the necessity for special provision for those students whose needs could be met within the mainstream schools that they were already attending (para 3.31). The committee considered that these measures would ensure that no child would henceforth be labelled as handicapped, and, whatever a child's disability, there would be a positive statement of the type of appropriate education which was not only required, but which would be provided. The Warnock Report and the inclusion of some of its findings in the 1981 Education Act impacted on the arena of school and particularly teachers who were called upon to implement the new measures. As the majority of students with Special Educational Needs were now to be educated in mainstream classes they would follow the same curriculum as their peers, but would need help differentially to achieve the specified curricular goals (DES, 1978).

Unfortunately the recommendations espoused in the Warnock Report were not always implemented successfully. Measures which had been designed to increase government expenditure did not succeed universally. The removal of the system of categorisation as previously practised would appear to have been an enlightened move towards greater

equity for the school population, and as such is acknowledged by critics of the report, such as Barton and Tomlinson (1984). However Barton and Tomlinson (1984) consider that the removal of categories may have been a measure designed to reduce expenditure. Moreover, the imprecise definitions of special needs resulted in a relaxation of the obligations upon local authorities. Anomalies occurred geographically, not only in recording the types of difficulty, but also in allotting resources. Areas whose students with special educational needs had been taught in mainstream schools tended to continue with the practice. However those areas with special schools had difficulty in transferring funding to alternative provision. Not only the needs of the students, but also the availability of resources were considerations undertaken by educational psychologists (Riddell *et al.*, 1994), and it would appear that provision depended on a political and geographical lottery. What had been designed as an equitable and humane approach to assessment and provision failed many students. As Warnock commented in 1993 when reviewing the success of the Report:

'I was very naïve not to assume that the financial situation would be such that the only way to get money for special needs was to get a statement which means less spending on the ones without a statement. I would like to go back to a position in which only 2 per cent of children have statements, with money allocated to the other 18 per cent. Unless we do that, a lot of children will slip through the net'

(Warnock quoted in Riddell and Brown, 1994 p.12).

In 1994 a Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs, issued by the Department of Education and Science, gave practical guidance to local education authorities and the governing bodies of all maintained schools on their responsibilities towards all children with special stage assessment and individual action plans (DfE, 1994). This was updated and extended in 2001 (DfES, 2001), but despite these measures, divergent constructions of what are considered learning difficulties or

special educational needs and the responses necessary, continue to cause inequalities in the provision offered by local authorities and implemented by schools (British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body, 2005; Clough *et al.*, 2000; Lepkowska, 2005; Ofsted, 2005).

Further, one of the reasons that support for such an approach has continued is that *'the process of statementing and the protection of scarce resources are prioritised above the needs of the child'* with some local authorities providing insufficient information to parents (British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body, 2005 p.2), thus compounding parents' natural concerns over their children's welfare and progress and reinforcing existing individualistic systems of assessment.

'Some children who are not recorded, but who are seen as having Special educational needs by parents or professionals, are thought to be disadvantaged by not having a label which distinguishes them clearly from "normal" students. In a climate of resource constraints distance from the norm has become valued'

(Allan, 1996 p.223).

However, special education generally remained largely unmodified and difficulties defined in terms of individual disabilities remained the dominant perspective while philosophical and sociological debates continued in other areas of education (Ainscow, 1998a; Lewis, 1998). For the purposes of this research into the impact of forms of grouping on students' participation, a school's response and teachers' views and practices in relation to Warnock's recommendations are significant. The Warnock Report was not based on any theories of learning and did not challenge the prevailing symbol-processing approach to mind and its associated theories of learning and knowledge (Mayer, 1996). In light of these criticisms, further theorising in the field led to the development of another model for understanding and addressing educational need that emerged from the academic community concerned with inclusion. This model exerted an influence again at the level of the social order.

Educational theories and special educational needs;

The organisational model

Skrtic (1991) suggests that traditional assumptions of special educational need which operate in schools handicap students by making them '*artifacts of the traditional curriculum*' (p.21). He argues that special education is itself an artifact of schools whose organisation is bureaucratic and that this bureaucracy contradicts the goal of universal education. Proponents of the organisational model similarly consider that special needs are not pre-existing but emerge because of social structures and organisational structures within schools such as:

- limitations in the curriculum generally, the consideration of which may provide insights into improvements necessary for an improved curriculum for all students not just those experiencing difficulties (Ainscow, 1998a):
- organisational inadequacies in schools (Skidmore, 1996):
- a discrepancy between the traits of certain students and the curriculum provided for them.

Certain practices were implicated in this model, for example, where a dissonance between individual students and the curriculum provided for them was identified, support was generally given to enable the students to reach the expectations of the system, through differentiated materials and additional adult assistance. This was common practice in the school involved in the research. Ainscow (1998), a proponent of this model however, was critical of these practices. He argued that, far from being liberal and well intentioned, they were in fact more covert representations of the 'psycho-medical model' which continued to provide special measures for special children, and which, when used for integration, reinforced the existing programme of the school. In his earlier work he argued that, while the difficulties that some students experience are multifactoral, the root causes are an inappropriate curriculum and teachers' lack of ability

in orchestrating the curriculum to stimulate students (Ainscow, 1991). He suggested that the difficulties evidenced by some students are in fact, '*indicators of the need for reform*' (p.3) which will benefit all students, and that inclusion must be the target. He cites writers such as Ballard (1995) who consider that inclusion must be a process:

'by which a school continues to explore new ways of developing responses that value diversity... In this way a school with an inclusive orientation defines "differentness" as an ordinary part of human experience'

(Ainscow, 1998b p.71).

which resonates with the notion of communities being diverse and allowing for this through differing trajectories of evolving competence.

The practices that Ainscow argues address these curriculum discontinuities include encouraging teachers to be reflective practitioners and developing schools as problem-solving organisations (Ainscow, 1991). Clearly practices that enable teachers to be more reflective can only benefit schools and students generally and the influence of these writers has been considerable in the school effectiveness movement. Ainscow (1991) acknowledges that the work of teachers is often constrained by '*wider social, political and organisational factors*' (p.7). Implicit within the organisational model is the assumption that if teachers follow recommended procedures such as reflective collaboration with colleagues in problem solving environments then progress towards equity and inclusion will be unproblematic. I would argue that this is a simplistic view. This is not the case, either from the perspectives of individual teachers, who could be presented with professional dilemmas which may be incapable of solution (Norwich, 1993), or from the perspective of schools faced with attempting to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable goals of securing success in public examinations and elevated positions in league tables and addressing the diversity of all students, including those

whose achievements may not be revealed by conventional academic assessment. The organisational model continues to be influential particularly in the debate about perceived strengths and weaknesses of grouping by ability. The mediation of theories from the field on teachers' practice is a further issue to be explored in the research study.

National policy and pedagogic practices;

Grouping by Ability

The Warnock report's recommendations predicated on equality of opportunities and human rights saw the diversity of individuals being addressed in part by differentiated support within mixed ability groupings. However, another response to differentiated support has seen setting students as the most effective way of addressing individual needs. This practice has emerged increasingly in response to the differentiation of national tests and standards of achievement associated with particular attainment targets specified in the national curriculum for England. Teachers have explicit goals to achieve for particular sub populations based on normative views of assessment. Any response that treats groups of students as homogeneous is problematic within a sociocultural view of mind and learning.

Research that has been undertaken on students' experiences of setting, streaming and mixed ability teaching, emanates largely from America. However, Hallam, Ireson *et al.* (1999) suggest that much of this literature may not now be applicable in England and Wales due to the major changes in the education system which have taken place since 1988. Recent research on student and teacher perceptions fails to reach a clear consensus on the effects of homogeneous versus heterogeneous groupings (Hallam *et al.*, 1996; Harlen *et al.*, 1997; Sukhnandan *et al.*, 1998). What has been revealed by the studies are the features of settings which students consider contribute to their learning. Students who prefer mixed ability teaching suggest that classmates help them and they

learn more (Klingner *et al.*, 1998) while sharing ideas can change attitudes (Lyle, 1999). Advantages perceived by students in homogeneous ability groupings, such as sets, include students all working at the same level, lack of embarrassment over incorrect responses (Aylett, 2000), the availability of extra support (Klingner *et al.*, 1998) and that the work set is better matched to their needs (Hallam *et al.*, 2006). Some of the disadvantages of setting cited by students were the difficulties of working at the pace of specific sets and a view by students in low sets that some staff had a poor perception of them (Boaler *et al.*, 1998).

Advocates of mixed ability teaching in the education community (Ainscow, 1998c; Booth, 1996) suggest benefits such as better social adjustment for all students and positive role models for achievement (Hallam *et al.*, 1999). The perceived disadvantages of homogeneous ability grouping include:

- high expectations and associated high pressure for students in top sets and low expectations and limited opportunities for students in low sets being experienced (Boaler *et al.*, 1998):
- the inequality of the system (Hallam *et al.*, 1996):
- the construction by teachers of identities for students according to the set they are in – hardworking and conscientious associated with those in high sets and disruptive associated with those in lower sets (Bartholomew, 1999).

Support from teachers for homogeneous ability grouping suggests that this form of organisation makes classroom management easier and that students' curriculum needs are better matched (Hallam *et al.*, 1999).

Sukhnandan and Lee (1998) consider that the inconsistency in the findings of research into grouping may be attributable to the wide variety in the aims and size of individual

studies and the different measures of learning test measurements and comparisons and are therefore difficult to compare. Additionally, they comment that:

‘many reviewers and researchers have noted that much of this work has failed to disentangle the effects of streaming from pre-existing differences. These differences include teaching methods, curriculum content, teacher and student expectations, resources, level of ability and social characteristics’

(Sukhnandan *et al.*, 1998 p.12).

This thesis focuses on the impact of settings in relation to these other features of learning environments as well as the influences of membership of communities outside school. Later work by Hallam and Ireson (2006) indicates that the majority of students prefer setting by ability, but that this preference is strongly affected by such factors as gender, type of school and the sets in which the students were placed.

2.4 Settings within School

Settings emerge as students participate in activity and interact with teachers and others. It is through participation in activity that students’ experiences and ways of knowing and being are brought into settings and serve as influences that mediate their own and others’ participation and consequently the possibilities for learning that are created. Settings then *‘foreground subjective experiences within local contexts’* (Ivinson *et al.*, 2003 p.4). The arena of school is experienced and edited by teachers and students, and teachers in turn orchestrate the subject settings that students experience.

Applying Lave’s perspective to the teaching and learning of History, changes in the orchestration of settings i.e. the practices that teachers enact and their structuring of resources, such as the organisation of student groupings, (Benjamin *et al.*, 2003; Boaler *et al.*, 1998; Hallam *et al.*, 2002) and students’ seating (Nespor, 1997) alter what is made available to learn and by whom and transform the activity of ‘doing History’. Students,

like shoppers in the supermarket example (Lave, 1988), bring social identities and unique histories of participation and learning from the communities to which they belong, or within which they are required to participate in school, and these mediate their own and others' experiences of settings. It is here that the '*intersections in social space*' (Nespor 1997 p.xiii) become apparent as students bring with them to each setting not only the learning and identities they have appropriated from interactions within the school arena (Vygotsky, 1978), but also the results of the '*knots in the webs of practices which begin and end outside school*' (Nespor 1997 p.xiii). It is also in the setting that the representations of the subject and what it means to be a good student (Packer *et al.*, 2000) or a good reader (Wray, 1994) are realized as ways of acting and knowing become legitimised through teachers' practices. These representations, moreover, will not remain in one setting but will, through students' experiences enter other settings in which the students participate.

Because teachers orchestrate the subject settings they are key players in constructing the experiences of students. A teacher's pedagogy will undoubtedly be influenced by her ontological beliefs and epistemological beliefs. What teachers feel either intuitively or have learned will inevitably affect their attitudes to others and their views of students, and what they consider is effective pedagogy.

'A choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner. Pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message'

(Bruner, 1996 p.63).

A teacher's pedagogy may have been built up over a period of years and, indeed if they are a reflective practitioner, they may well be questioning the theories on which their practice is built and the success of their implementation on a regular basis, rejecting, modifying, reinforcing or extending these as appropriate (Schon, 1983). Their pedagogy

may be an amalgam of different, but complementary perspectives which have been subjected to the contingencies of the classroom and mediated as a result. Although there may be times when pragmatism dictates that it is appropriate to use practices which are products of theories of learning to which they do not generally subscribe, there is likely to be a central core to their pedagogy which remains constant and which drives their actions in the classroom.

Orchestrating settings: views of mind and pedagogic practice

A teacher who is committed to a theory of situated learning and the notion of participation as the key to learning and the transformation of identity (Lave *et al.*, 1991) might be expected to employ practices which ensure that students not only feel that they are part of a community of learners but have agency in their own learning (Bruner, 1996). This teacher's pedagogy is likely to be influenced by the theories of Vygotsky. The practices arising from this stance will involve, for example, students being in extensive dialogue with experienced others within practice whether with the teacher and the teacher's use of 'scaffolding' (Mercer, 1995) or peers as they negotiate meaning and achieve intersubjectivity. Adherence to sociocultural theories is likely to involve particular ways of organizing the classroom, students, activities within lessons and homework tasks. Assessment processes are likely to include negotiation and dialogue with students, encouraging them to reflect on their progress and motivation about the subject and on using measures to increase their confidence in their abilities, their self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bruner, 1996). Sfard (1998) argues that, based on a participationist discourse of learning, possibilities for learning are always made available for the learner.

'All options are always open, even if he or she carries a history of failure... ..the participation metaphor seems to bring a message of everlasting hope. Today you act one way; tomorrow you may act differently' (Sfard, 1998 p.8).

Teaching from this perspective would appear to be particularly appropriate for students with learning difficulties to whom the spectre of daily failure is only too common.

The above practices contrast with those of a teacher whose view of learning is heavily influenced by a symbol-processing view of mind where

'thinking and learning and development are often thought of as processes taking place inside the individual, with social influences coming from the outside'

(Bredo, 1999 p.31).

Teaching in this scenario is likely to involve a greater emphasis on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student with little opportunity for students to participate.

There may be far less collaboration between students, with the importance of individual effort and achievement being stressed. The classroom organisation and seating arrangements for students is likely to be more formal and tasks for homework, for example, are likely to be more standardized than differentiated.

Teachers and their practices have been found to be the most important influences in ensuring positive classroom experiences for students about being in the classroom (Zamorski *et al.*, 2002), with the teacher's role being a key factor in:

- the formation of students' self-worth at school when staff trust and make the students feel valued (Cooper, 1993; Phelan *et al.*, 1992):
- perceptions of subject lessons(Zamorski *et al.*, 2002):
- making students feel part of the community.

'The evaluation of students' conduct and their academic work is a crucial form of recognition of children by the adult who teaches them. It is the institutionalized way the teacher gratifies the children's desire for connection and recognition, not meeting these needs directly, however, but transmuting them. It is in the relationship to their

teacher that the children become students, drawn into the classroom community of practice and its new way of being ‘

(Packer *et al.*, 2000 p.236).

How students, particularly those with special educational needs, perceive teachers and the roles they take is therefore highly significant in determining the relationship between teacher and student. In research undertaken by Brannen (1996) it was revealed that students assigned teachers to one of three broad categories; one where the teachers were in powerful authoritarian positions compared to students, which reflects the practice associated with a transmission model of pedagogy and a symbol-processing view of mind; another where teachers were the observers and supporters of students as in a sociocultural view and the third where teachers were considered to have less power than the students. The role which was valued most highly by the students was that of the supportive teachers who *‘started you off....sorted out problems...and helped students go from another angle’* (Brannen, 1996 p.59). Students considered that an approachable and available teacher who was prepared to help when difficulties arise to be essential in maintaining a good relationship between students and teacher (Blatchford, 1996; Chaplain, 1996b; McCallum *et al.*, 2000). This, it is argued, is particularly important for students with special educational needs who may become demotivated when unable to understand material and reticent to approach a teacher who is considered unsympathetic (Phelan *et al.*, 1992). These same students are considered more likely to co-operate and be responsive to teachers who take time to help them and are concerned with their progress (Oakley *et al.*, 2002),

Students also consider that a teacher’s willingness and ability to explain things well, and maintain good class discipline are important issues in maintaining motivation, engagement and good behaviour (Shreeve *et al.*, 2002; Zamorski *et al.*, 2002). There is

some evidence that students are most positive about their perceptions of student-teacher relationships in the earlier years of secondary education (Keys *et al.*, 1993) with fewer students in Year 9 than in Year 7 believing that teachers encourage them to work to their full potential or are consistent in controlling class behaviour. Keys and Fernandes (1993) suggest that these findings may not necessarily reflect what is actually happening at school and that older students may *'have become more discerning and worldly wise and less willing to express extreme levels of enthusiasm'* (pI-62). However they also argue that, despite this caveat, students' perceptions of school and the practices of the teachers are likely to have a profound influence on their behaviour and learning.

This consideration of theory-practice links informs the research study in that a sociocultural model that takes account of social influences at two levels, that of the social order level and the lived world, highlights the practice issues to be considered in looking at how participation is enabled in settings and their impact on learners identified as experiencing literacy difficulties. It is important, therefore, to consider the literacy practices and tools that are assumed in communities of readers, and how these, in turn, are experienced by children who are not readers as they engage in school tasks and the implications of these for learning history.

Being 'people like us': belonging to a community of readers

Membership of a community implies being aware of and participating in the construction of the discourse, which is the currency of that community. Appreciation of the implicit meanings of specialist discourses becomes greater as one becomes more established in the community (Greeno, 1998) and shapes and is shaped by its discourses (Christie, 1995). What does it mean to be *'people like us'* when the people like us are members of a community of readers? Greeno *et al.* (1998) suggest that literate behaviour is defined by such factors, amongst others, as the ability to participate in discussions, share ideas,

make oral and written contributions to the work of the community and take multiple perspectives. Membership of a community of readers, as with any other, can contribute significantly to our awareness of self and affect our perception of ourselves and others depending on '*whether or not they belong to this particular group*' (Greeno, 1999 p.139).

As readers we are able to bring meaning to a set of symbols which hold the key to expansion and clarification of ideas. Jones (1990) suggests that the act of reading is a transactional process in which the expectations and experiences of the reader are brought to the text, and the context in which it is read will necessarily condition the interpretation placed upon it by the reader. The more wide-ranging our reading the more extensive the range of associations we bring to each text and the richer the experience we gain from the writing, with memories from earlier texts being reinforced or challenged by newer ones (Jones, 1990).

As readers we are aware that reading and writing are processes of language as much as speaking (Meek, 1990). We know that words may have different meanings depending upon the context in which they are used, and because of experience of other texts know how to use a range of appropriate strategies to clarify and correct initial mistakes in our understanding (Greeno, 1999). As readers we can:

- articulate the words with appropriate emphasis, and understand them knowing that the words themselves and the interpretation given to them are situated and context-dependent (Brown *et al.*, 1989).
- understand what is meant by each sentence and the way that it fits in with that preceding it and following it, with some expectation of what is about to come. Without this, Wray (1994) suggests that a sentence such as 'The old man the boats' is one which challenges understanding, but which a 'reader' could, with revision comprehend. (p.64)

- understand and follow ideas which are expounded in each paragraph and fit into the piece as a whole.

Additionally, as readers we are able to read and understand a genre such as literature which gives the opportunity to learn and appreciate other cultures while producing '*new knowledge about themselves (the reader) that continues to function alongside existing knowledge*' (Sumara, 1998 p.206). We are also aware of which reading approaches we might use, knowing that our approach to a novel is likely to be very different from that used when reading and analysing a report. We are able to scan a text to acquire an initial impression of the material or '*get inside the text and focus on developing interconnected interpretations of the ideas in the text*' (Greeno *et al.*, 1999 p.145). We are confident that when necessary we are able to be critical towards a text, whether reading it for relaxation or for professional reasons. Wray and Lewis, (1997) suggest that modern readers are required to be able to adopt the following roles when critically contemplating a text;

- *a code-breaker (How can I crack this? What does it say?)*
- *a text participant (How can I understand this? What does it mean?)*
- *a text user (How can I use this? What can I do with it?)*
- *a text analyst (How can I respond to this? What does this do to me?)'*

(Wray *et al* 1997 p.104).

As readers we are able to do all of the above, knowing that we have the choice every day to read any number of texts or simply to ignore them, but mostly because we are readers we choose to read. '*Readers read – and they would not be caught without reading material, just in case they get stuck somewhere with nothing to do*' (Greeno *et al.*, 1999 p.139). The choices that we have to read and the ability to participate in the community of readers impact significantly on the other choices we make, and indeed, what choices

are open to us, in our life such as occupation, hobbies and family activities. We are able to communicate, discuss, share in and align with joint enterprises with others within that community whether locally, nationally or internationally, engaging in the discourse of literacy (Greeno *et al.*, 1999).

Being 'people like us' who do not feel they belong to a community of readers

Because literacy in school is linked directly or indirectly with the school curriculum, it takes place within a forum where its practices, such as talk, may become atomized and abstracted from the discourses which are experienced by a student outside school. The world of written text with which they are familiar outside school may bear little relationship to the language in specialist discourses which Gee (1996) refers to which are encountered in school subjects such as Science, Geography, History. Participation at the very margins of each subject community will mean that, unless students who have difficulties with literacy are able to experience themselves as agentive and move further into community practice, their self esteem, which is a trace of their agentive experiences (Holland *et al.* 1998) diminishes. This is further compounded as they see their peers progress towards a more active participatory role, where their contributions and competence are acknowledged, while highlighting and reinforcing their identity of incompetence. Settings within schooled subject communities are very public forums in which difficulties with literacy are made manifest and there is often an audience who know *'how to look for, recognize, stimulate, make visible and, depending on the circumstances, keep quiet or expose' problems'* (McDermott, 1999, p.12).

With requirements of tests or examinations demanding that students enact their literacy practices in isolation from ongoing purposes and needs these tests become formidable tasks for those students who experience difficulties with literacy. These students may take some time to articulate the words and deconstruct them into single syllables before

making sense of them, fail to absorb all the necessary information (Male *et al.*, 1985), take longer to write answers and find difficulty in monitoring, or revising their own texts (Wray, 1994), resulting in a situation familiar to many of them – that of not finishing a task (Male *et al.*, 1985). Because they are often not able to engage in joint enterprises, tasks may not be interpreted in a way anticipated either by teachers or examiners (Bredo, 1999). Ideas, which may well be relevant to the questions and contain original and worthwhile thinking, may not be revealed because of the difficulties experienced and time taken to write down the ideas. For those who have problems with literacy, hearing words articulated may be some indication of the meaning of the subject matter. However, once away from the source of the language, and faced with words they do not understand, many find it an uphill struggle with which they cannot cope. Wray (1994) cites findings (Baker *et al.*, 1984; Garner *et al.*, 1981) which indicate that poorer readers concentrate on '*reading as a decoding process rather than as a meaning-getting process*' (p.69).

Competent readers are not only able to identify the point at which the subject matter of a sentence becomes unclear and return to it (Greeno *et al.*, 1999), but also use earlier information to assess meaning (Wray, 1994). For students who experience difficulties with literacy, however, there may be few points at which there was understanding originally thus leading to possible further confusion. In school there are going to be settings in which the difficulties will be less evident such as Drama, Physical Education, Art and Games, but those subjects which are heavily language based such as English or Humanities will inevitably produce opportunities for the difficulties to be rehearsed. Additionally, a student with difficulties with literacy, attempting to follow an 'inclusionist' curriculum without the assistance of some of the aids considered to be integrationist, such as differentiated work, or a literacy programme, suffers loss of self esteem when unable to do the work and aware of the 'gaze' of peers.

‘The difficulty is that they are often out of step with the majority of their peers... ..The idea that such a child will somehow... ..learn to read as a result of following the normal secondary curriculum, which does not include basic literacy teaching, not only lacks common sense, but belongs in the realms of fantasy’

(Lingard, 1996 p.41).

Engaging with the subject of History

For those students who do not belong to a community of readers, subjects like History may pose particular problems. The specialist discourse and demands made by the curriculum can severely reduce the learning available to these students and marginalise their participation in a community of schooled historians. Interpretations are socially and culturally mediated (Bredo, 1999) and

‘the conceptual demands upon the reader of historical writing are frequently very great requiring an understanding of a bygone age in which different values and assumptions underlay interactions and events’

(Hoodless, 1998 p.5).

Students will bring with them their own understandings of the world and at times these understandings will be used to explain events from other times and places (Husbands, 1996). Claxton (1993) cited in Husbands (1996) argues that these understandings might be seen as ‘minitheories,’ which are constructed from instinctive reactions and the people and social and cultural tools such as books and the media with which students come into contact. For those students, whose access to History outside school, is limited there may be a dissonance between the construction which they place on historical events and not only those expected by teachers implementing the curriculum, but also those offered by peers who may have access to wider and more sophisticated cultural tools.

Different discourses operate within any classroom. The genesis of discourse is found in social and cultural practice (Lave *et al.*, 1991). The discourses of the History classroom are produced within the different social and cultural practices embedded within the classroom and subject and brought in from settings outside the classroom by the teacher and students (Christie 1995). One of these discourses is the specialist discourse which historians use, drawing on the language of the past; the language of historical time; the language of historical description and analysis; and the language of historical processes (Husbands, 1996). Language is part of the construction of historical understanding (Cunnah, 2000).

Haydn et al. (1997) suggest that phrases such as ‘the church’ will almost certainly mean the institution for the teacher but may well mean a building for the pupil, and if this is the case, depending on where the pupil lives, might mean any one of many different structures. Participating in the specialist discourse of History, whether within the classroom or outside it, will certainly necessitate the use of the correct terms, the reifications of the community. However, some of the terms such as ‘interregnum’ which are presented have little relevance for students of the twentieth century. As Lowenthal (2000) comments, *‘in England the famous spoof 1066 and All That is no longer funny because few now have even heard of the names and dates it ridicules.’* (p.69).

Additionally as Husbands (1996) argues, the difficulties which face students with historical terminology are in fact multi-layered.

‘Concepts, ideas and historical language spill into each other at high speed. This is true of even relatively simple sentences. The statement “In 1642 a Civil War broke out between King and Parliament” assumes a grasp of a dating convention, familiarity with the concept of a Civil War which was distinctive from, say events in America

between 1861 and 1865... ..and some understanding of the nature of kingship and the role of Parliament in seventeenth century England'

(p.37)

Many students, not only those who experience difficulties with literacy, may struggle and become confused if the teaching techniques and the demands placed upon them are inappropriate. For students with difficulties with literacy the challenges are even more formidable when faced with the tasks of deciding which information is relevant to support an argument, detect bias or attempt a piece of extended writing (Cunnah, 2000).

The 1995 OFSTED report on the teaching of History was critical of the inadequate amount of attention that was given by teachers to the needs of those students who had difficulties with reading and writing. The report criticises the use of unsuitable resources and tasks for these students and insufficient use of support staff to enable the students to have greater access to the curriculum (p.14). Haydn *et al.* (1997) particularly emphasise that History lessons should not contain disproportionate amounts of reading and writing, particularly for those students for whom these exercises are difficult – *'increased literacy is a by-product of History teaching, not its main aim'* (p.144). However, while the power enacted through the curriculum demands that written evidence is the formally legitimate representation of understanding, students such as those who are the subjects of this research will continue to be disadvantaged.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

‘Theoretical abstractions and the practical realities of research are so interrelated that each has to be understood alongside and in connection with the other’

(Griffiths, 1998 p.31).

What I saw as the persuasiveness of the sociocultural view of mind and approach to understanding learning led me to consider how this applied to the students whom I had taught and with whom I was about to engage in my research. I was convinced that learning is indeed a process of not simply absorbing information but *‘a process of coming to be and forging identities in activity in the world’* (Lave, 1992 cited in Packer *et al.* 2000 p.229). Further, that this process is dependent upon and affected by the social contexts in which it takes place and the participation allowed to those involved in these settings. These settings themselves are constructed dynamically moment by moment by the participants and the learning experiences that they bring with them. Additionally, the learning from these contexts is transformative of identity potentially in both positive and negative ways (Wenger, 1998).

The students with whom I was to work had already been assigned the identities of students with special educational needs by the school, and I wished to investigate how far they had appropriated these identities through the difficulties which they experienced with literacy and what effects different settings had on these identities. The difficulties and the evolving identities meant that the opportunities for participation and thence learning that was made available to them in school and outside of school would be different from that which was available to other students. However, as with any individual, each of them was a particular person in a particular place at a particular time (Griffiths, 2005). Each of them had arrived at different places on their own trajectories

of evolving competence through their personal learning biography – their history of participation (Chang-Wells *et al.*, 1993). This biography had been formed from experiences from within school and from other learning environments outside such as the family and friendship communities in which they had been participants. During their time at school the extent of their participation in the communities of the school and, therefore their learning, will provide experiences to enable a renegotiation of those identities which have been constructed from their prior learning experiences (Wenger, 1998). Despite being individuals with unique stories to tell the students that I am concerned with share the common experience of being ‘people like us’ who are part of a wider community of non-readers. However for six and a half hours of each week day they find themselves in the arena of school in a community of students, the majority of whom experience few if any problems with the tools of schooled literacy.

This majority, as a consequence, will have participated more fully and therefore will have shared histories of learning and their practice will have constructed what it means to be a legitimate peripheral participant in each subject community (Wenger, 1998). The students who are the participants in this research may not, however, enjoy a similar legitimacy of participation or a sense of belonging with those students whose participation has been greater and thus their identities in those settings will include layers of marginalisation (Wenger 1998) or non-legitimated peripheral participation. As Wenger (1998) argues, ‘*over time such histories create discontinuities between those who have been participating and those who have not*’ (p.103). They may, however, have shared histories of participation or non-participation with other students who also experience difficulties similar to those which they suffer and employ similar coping strategies. Just as the discontinuities created by the lack of mutual engagement contribute to the formation of identity, so equally the reaction of others to their extended identity incompetence will also contribute to identity formation.

'Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them'

(Erikson, 1968 p.22-23 cited in Penuel and Wertsch, 1995 p.87)

The experiences of the students chosen to participate in the research may not only differ from subject to subject in the curriculum, but may also differ in different settings within the subjects. As Wenger (1998) argues their reactions to those experiences are also unlikely to be uniform, varying possibly from day to day. The task I faced, therefore, was to find a research design which would evince the rich data representing the variety of the experiences and reactions to these which I was sure were waiting to be revealed. That in turn allowed me to follow particular students as they experienced History lessons in two different grouping organisation over two years in one particular school.

3.1 Context of the Study

The research is centred upon Cullishaven School a co-educational 11-16 comprehensive school in the West Country with 1200 students on roll. The cohort of the school is divided into five years, each of which is itself divided into two groups, named either Cullis or Haven. The two groups each have four mixed ability tutor groups with 30 students each. The four tutor groups in Cullis are named C, U, L and I, and in Haven H, A, V and E. These tutor groups meet for registration and pastoral time and for some subjects such as Art, Physical Education, Drama, Craft, Design and Technology and Humanities subjects in Years 7 and 8. The school was chosen because I was aware that although all students were taught in mixed ability tutor groups in Years 7 and 8 an experiment on grouping by ability in Humanities had taken place in 1998 with Year 9 students. This experiment resulted in increased motivation and participation for students

with learning difficulties. Reservations, however, had been expressed by the staff about the effects for the more able. The decision was made therefore that all students in Years 7 and 8 would continue to be taught in mixed ability tutor groups and this organisation would continue for the majority of students in Year 9 for the academic year 2000 to 2001. However, to ensure greater support for those students with learning difficulties they were to be taught together in a group known as the 'Foundation group.' The Humanities department was encouraged by the success of the experiment with students with learning difficulties and was enthusiastic when I approached them with the proposal for this research.

My original proposal had been to compare the reaction of students in Years 8 and 9 in this school with those of students in another school which did not employ grouping by ability. However, since the original proposal in early 1999 more schools, as noted in Chapter 2, had introduced grouping by ability in all areas of the curriculum and this narrowed the number available for comparison. This was particularly difficult as an important criterion for using a school was that it should have an ethos similar to that of the original school, which is highly regarded by the local community and seen as having an extremely caring attitude towards its student population. Additional external demands upon schools increased the reluctance of teachers to participate and the overtures I made to several schools to encourage them to participate were unsuccessful. This led me to refocus my design and concentrate on one school. However, my hypothesis did not change and remained a belief that in particular learning contexts grouping by ability can act as a positive practice for students with learning difficulties.

3.2 Research Design

For the purposes of this research the learning difficulties under consideration are confined to problems with literacy and their effects on students' access to, construction and

understanding of and participation in History in a community of schooled historians (Lave *et al.*, 1991). As explained in Chapter 1 I draw on Nespor's (1997) metaphor that a school may be understood as '*an intersection in social space, a knot in a web of practices that stretch into complex systems beginning and ending outside the school*' (pxiii). I adopt this metaphor and extend it, arguing that the settings in school which are orchestrated, constructed for and experienced and shaped by the students may also be seen as intersections in social space.

This meant that for all participants their participation and learning and therefore formative events in their identity construction in the History settings did not take place in isolation, but were affected by their experiences in other communities which they brought with them to each setting. These experiences will mediate how identities are transformed either positively or negatively through the learning which takes place in these communities (Wenger, 1998). It was important therefore that the methods I used would reveal what other factors both within school and outside might have been influential.

Scribner (Scribner, 1997), argues that a sociocultural perspective requires particular methodological principles.

'The theory suggests that changes on the sociocultural level – changes in activities and mediational means – will afford possibilities for changes in individual cognition. Accordingly, an analysis of changing social practices becomes integral to – rather than merely peripheral to – an enquiry into learning and development. This framework also places a premium on the comparative method, one that searches for commonalities and differences among social practices within or between cultures
(p.271).

Focus of attention

The approach that I chose to use within a sociocultural framework drew on ethnographic methods. Woods (1986) suggests that ethnography, with its roots in anthropology, enables the researcher to identify the layers which compose social reality. Like an ethnographic study my research relied on rich description, but in my study the richness came from the attention paid to different planes of analysis and the mediation of those (Lave, 1988). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) argue that ethnography,

‘rests on two key assumptions. First, the principle of naturalism argues that human behaviour is best understood by exploring behaviour in natural, ordinary routine situations, It is this principle which distinguishes ethnography from experimental research design. Second, ethnography is about understanding, the researcher is therefore required to develop rapport, trust and empathy with the subject of the research (p.119).

The educational researcher working within the ethnographic tradition must acknowledge that there are many areas of school life which are problematic and cannot be taken for granted. To investigate these she must be willing to spend time working with a group to understand the perspectives of the members of the group, acknowledging that the context which is being studied is complex and often changing (Delamont and Hamilton, 1993; Woods, 1986) and *‘to take account of longer-term trends affecting the situations being studied’* (Hammersley, 2006 p.6).

Hammersley (2006) argues that undertaking a short-term ethnographic study may lead to *‘neglecting the local and wider history of the institution being studied as well as the biographies of the participants’* (p.5). Additionally he suggests that sometimes ethnography may attribute the cause of the behaviour of the participants solely to the contexts in which they are being studied rather than considering their lives beyond those contexts. The sociocultural framework with its emphasis of learning being taken from context to context enabled me to emulate the

detailed consideration of the ethnographic approach, but highlighted the mediation of one level by another.

This study would be at two levels with different data for the two levels being collected. The first level would be that of the **community** level of the school as an arena generally, but with particular reference to the practices which mediate the construction of the settings within the History department as one of the constellations of practice within the arena of school. The data collected here would reveal the **enduring practices** of the higher order institutional framework in which setting is constituted (Lave 1988).

The second level would be that of the **setting** which is dynamic as it is constructed by the participants. In the setting **interaction** needed to be considered at the interpersonal level as it evolves moment by moment, but also at the intrapersonal level drawing on the accounts of people's experiences of the setting, of being a learner and a teacher. It would be necessary to conduct the case study **longitudinally** at both levels to consider developments at the arena level of the History Faculty and at the setting level to track the impact of the students' experiences of the different groupings in Years 8 and 9. The pilot study was with Year 9 students in a Foundation group. The main study tracked students from Year 8 when they were taught in mixed ability groupings into Year 9 when they were taught in a 'Foundation group,' which was specifically organised for students with learning difficulties. Data collection would focus on students' negotiation of their learning and the development and transformation of their identities, not only moment by moment, but also the outcomes of this over time as they evolved as learners of History and 'schooled' people.

The conceptualisation of the research questions draws on the work of (Rogoff, 1995) who argues that:

'It is incomplete to focus only on the relationship of individual development and social interaction without concern for the cultural activity in which personal and interpersonal actions take place. And it is incomplete to assume that development occurs in one plane and not in other (e.g. that children develop but that their partners or their cultural communities do not)

(p.141).

The first questions focused at the arena level of the Humanities Faculty as part of the constellation of practice and asked:

- How was classroom History organised in the school at Key Stage 3?
- What constraints or opportunities were experienced by individual teachers as a consequence?
- How were student groupings established and organised?
- What constraints or opportunities were experienced by individual teachers as a consequence?

The following questions were to be addressed at the setting level:

- How is History in the classroom represented and practised for students with learning difficulties in the school?
- What experiences from other subject classrooms and outside school do the students bring into the settings in the History classroom?
- How is History understood and represented by these students?
- How far are these students seen as participants of and contributors to a community of schooled historians (Lave *et al.*, 1991) by themselves, the teacher, the researcher?

Type of data and methods

In Table 3.1 the methods I selected are set against the research questions. In the discussion that follows I elaborate the relationship between the method and the data sought.

Table 3.1 Relationship between research questions and methods of data collection

Research Questions	Methods
How was classroom History organized in the school at Key Stage 3?	Interviews with teachers
What constraints or opportunities were experienced by individual teachers as a consequence?	Interviews with teachers
How were student groupings established and organized?	Interviews with teachers
What constraints or opportunities were experienced by individual teachers as a consequence?	Interviews with teachers
How is History in the classroom represented and practised for students with learning difficulties in the school?	Interviews with teachers Classroom observation
What experiences from other subject classrooms and outside school do the students bring into the settings in the History classroom?	Questionnaires Interviews with students using projective technique
How is History understood and represented by these students?	Interviews with students using projective technique Classroom observation
How far are these students seen as participants of and contributors to a community of schooled historians by themselves, the teacher, the researcher?	Interviews with students using projective technique Interviews with teachers using projective technique Classroom observation

These methods were employed in both Year 8 and Year 9

- 1) Questionnaire on social communities in which students are participants outside school and the History made available in those communities.
- 2) Questionnaire on preferred ways of working
- 3) Interviews using 1) and 2) above and 4)
- 4) Projective Technique to elicit students' views of subjects in relation to themselves and Teachers' views in relation to themselves in history
- 5) Video/observation of lessons

6) Interviews on students' understanding of lessons videoed and observed

Student questionnaire on outside communities and History made available in those.

As the students are in Year 8 and Year 9 this research is set firmly in the context of adolescence. It has been suggested that the three major social communities which have the greatest influence on adolescents are the peer network, the family and the school. To understand the students' situations one must consider all three aspects (DuBois *et al.*, 1998). I argue that the influences of the social and cultural practices of these contexts are brought by students into schools and intersect within the social spaces of school and its settings (Nespor, 1997). A biographical questionnaire was designed therefore to investigate the background of the students, centring on students' hobbies, viewing and reading habits with particular regard to programmes and books which were concerned with History, their use of libraries and the place of History in their lives outside school. Earlier research has indicated that this biographical detail reveals a rich source of data (Keys *et al.*, 1993). It also serves to establish a basis for individual interviews from which to investigate students' preconceptions of History (Pendry *et al.*, 1997). Experiences of students outside school can also play a major part in contributing to the understanding of historical concepts (Lee, 1991)

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered in the pilot study. This was successful as a foundation and an introduction to the interviews and acted as a device to place the students at their ease. The discipline of History is heavily language based and its linguistic demands are high (Haydn *et al.*, 1997). I wished to investigate not only the attitude of the students to reading texts other than those required for school but also their attitude towards borrowing books. This original questionnaire had a section on general reading, but I amended the questionnaire for the main research (Appendix B) to include a

section on the frequency of the students' use of the library, a resource to which they had easy access and which cost them nothing.

Student Questionnaire on preferred ways of working

To identify any areas to be investigated more thoroughly and to help me interpret individual participation I constructed a Likert-type rating scale for the pilot study (Appendix C). This was designed to investigate students preferred ways of working, views of Humanities organisation, and lead as a prompt to questions about their perceptions of their participation. The scale to register responses was extended from the traditional Likert scale of between 5 and 7 to 10 which I felt gave greater flexibility and provided for a more subtle gradation of student response. These differing gradations were explained very carefully to the participants, and were written at the top of the questionnaire.

The pilot study revealed a serious omission in the original design. I had not included any questions on the form about working preference, alone, in a group etc., yet could see that this would be vital information given that my theoretical perspective emphasised the need to understand learning in its relationship to the setting in which it takes place (Wertsch *et al.*, 1995). I decided that I would ask the questions in the pilot study interviews yet I had no prior data on which to base my questions. This meant that the students had not previously considered the question and I had to explain it to them which was time-consuming, a luxury which was not going to be available to me in an interview of 50 minutes in the main research.

For this reason a section on working preferences was included in the questionnaire for the main study (Appendix D) and I explained in the general lessons introducing the research that the section marked with an asterisk * required greater consideration than other

sections before completion. This proved to be much more successful and led to thoughtful, reflective and revealing replies from the students in the main interviews in Year 8 allowing insights into their reasons for participation, or lack of it, in the classroom and provided an excellent prompt in the interviews. I decided for Year 9 that an introduction to the section on working preferences would make my requests more explicit and included this for the questionnaire (Appendix E). I did not consider that the section on the timing of lessons which had been included for the pilot (Appendix C) was necessary for the main research and, as a result, it was deleted (Appendix D). To enable the students to compare the Humanities lessons in Year 8 with those in Year an additional section was introduced on the questionnaire for Year 9 together with questions about their favourite subject. These latter questions were to provide an introduction, should there be time, to discuss the students' possible choices for options for Year 10.

Interviews about arena influences and setting experiences

The individual interviews with staff and students were to be the cornerstone around which the research was to be built. I conducted all the interviews myself and therefore any possibility of variation between interviewers did not arise (Entwistle *et al.*, 1972). However I was very aware that respondents may present themselves differently in different settings, at different times and to different people (Ball, 1993). The most important criterion for the interviews was to investigate the '*relevant personal context, the idiosyncratic association, beliefs and ideas*' (Merton *et al* cited in Cohen et al. (1989 p.326). This criterion clearly eliminated closed techniques such as structured interviews where I would have had little freedom to extemporise or extend questioning where necessary. This was to prove extremely important when using the projective technique in the first set of interviews and discussions on understanding in the subsequent interviews. I decided to employ semi-structured interviews which allowed the

'respondents to express themselves at some length, but offered enough shape to prevent aimless rambling' (Wragg, 1982 p.10).

Teacher Interviews

By interviewing the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs. King, I hoped that I could illuminate facets of the arena and its provision for the students classified as having special educational needs generally. More particularly, by interviewing staff in the History Faculty, I could investigate how the arena of the Faculty and its practices impacted on the settings in relation to the teachers' practices and their perceptions of the influence of this on students. Interviews were conducted with Mr. Dale (Head of Faculty) Mr. Tudor (Head of History) and Mr. Stuart another History teacher at the beginning of the project to ascertain the rationale for setting and the effects on the faculty arena. In years 2 and 3 of the research interviews were undertaken with Mr. Tudor (who became the Head of Faculty) and Mr. Stuart to investigate progress and possible changes. Interviews with teachers would provide, at the intrapersonal level, further illumination of the students interpersonal interactions and of the teachers' practice.

The order in which the interviews with the students and the teachers on their reflections about the students were carried out was extremely important, as the pilot revealed that the interviews with the students should be carried out *before* those with the teachers. In the pilot study the students' interviews had raised several issues which needed to be investigated and the teachers' interviews were already completed. The order in which the interviews took place was amended for the main research and themes raised by the students were then addressed in interviews with teachers. Additionally, the issues of student participation and understanding were considered by the teachers using the same projective technique as that employed with the students.

Student Interviews

At the settings level interviews with students would provide intrapersonal evidence of lived experience of participation and belonging over time. It was important therefore to ensure that the greatest value was elicited from the interviews. The experience of the pilot study revealed that it was of the utmost importance to leave a sufficient interval between the completion of the questionnaires and undertaking the interviews to ensure that I was totally cognisant with the data before I spoke to the students individually. During the pilot study questions to the teachers were of a general nature and it was clear that more in-depth questions on individual students needed to be included.

I had determined, with the agreement of the Humanities staff, to restrict the timing of the interviews to Humanities lessons. This was for two reasons. Firstly, I did not wish to disrupt the timetable of other subject departments, and, secondly, I wished to minimise the possibility of withdrawing students from other lessons which they may enjoy. I had spent some time in Humanities lessons explaining the research to the students and most, if not all, appeared interested and keen to participate. I did not want to jeopardise this benevolent attitude by impinging on other lessons which they enjoyed, and thereby running the risk of apathetic or antipathetic responses. Likewise, for obvious reasons, I did not want to be conducting interviews in the last period on a Friday afternoon. The school operates a two-week timetable and adhering to the above principles consistently posed considerable problems. I had decided that I would fit several interviews into the appropriate days, and this I did for the first week. However, I realised, when listening to the audiotapes of some of the interviews, that this was not the most appropriate method of organisation, as I discovered that I had missed what I considered to be some vital prompts. This error led me to limit the number of interviews to three per day when lessons permitted, but, due to the timetable, there were some days when only one Humanities lesson was in operation and others when there were none.

This meant that the time taken to conduct all the interviews was considerably longer than I had first anticipated, but the resulting data was of a much higher quality.

The first of two semi-structured interviews which were undertaken in each of Years 8 and 9 addressed:

- The social identities which students had constructed in their family and with their peer groups outside school and any interests and hobbies in which they participated.

Although I realised that these were significant areas to the construction of the identities of the students, it was only later in the interviews that it was revealed, that it was in the communities where students participated in the hobbies, that for three out of the four students it was the site of the greatest experience of a sense of belonging.

- The learning made available to and the participation of students with History outside the classroom through books, T.V., films etc.
- their liking for the subject within the 'classroom'
- their perception of their understanding of the subject
- their perception of the teacher's view of the students' understanding
- their perception of their participation in lessons.
- in Year 9 the students' perception of the change in organisation was also addressed.

The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews was confirmed by the depth of responses by students on the pilot study.

I had introduced my role when administering the questionnaires in Year 8 and explained the purposes of the research. This was repeated in Year 9. Each interview was audiotaped and was preceded by a confirmation that the data was strictly confidential and that the student could, at any time, turn off the tape recorder. It was explained that there were no wrong answers and that the research was seeking to establish their ideas. It was also emphasised that the student could refuse to answer any question if they wished – none did so. Each interview lasted 45-50 minutes.

Experience of settings: views of participation and competence

Projective Technique

Students

I was aware that semi-structured interviews alone might not enable me to gain access to the sense of belonging, or lack of it, in each setting which the student experienced and therefore their participation and learning leading to the construction of social identities. I had been searching for the most appropriate method of encouraging the students to respond with a high degree of reflection and candour and my knowledge of projective techniques was limited. It was while at a presentation by a colleague (Wearmouth, 2000) who described the development of her idea of 'talking stones' that I became interested and could see the possibilities and advantages of exploring the technique with the students in this research. After discussion with her about how to implement it I decided to tailor it to my requirements and utilise it in this study.

The use of projective techniques has evolved from their genesis in clinical psychology in the early twentieth century and they now have a wide range of applications in market research and, to a lesser extent, in education.

"They can be involving and fun for respondents, tap feelings, perceptions and attitudes that can be difficult to access by more direct questioning techniques and can be a rich source of new leads and ideas for researchers."

(Catterall *et al.*, 2000 p.247)

The most important feature of a projective technique is its basis of unstructured tasks and virtually unlimited client responses (Clark, 1995).

There are large numbers of instruments which are available, such as Rorschach tests; Thematic apperception test; Picture Arrangement Test. However, I rejected these for the following reasons. Many of these require prerequisite psychological knowledge and training and much depends on the skill of an experienced interpreter (Clark, 1995).

Some, such as thematic apperception, involve pictures or stories which have the inherent risk of introducing preconceived notions to the students, and once again need to be interpreted carefully. In addition this type of technique requires verbal fluency on the part of the respondent. This latter caveat has obvious disadvantages for the students who are the subject of this research. Some of the tests require a substantial amount of time, not available to this research.

The above reservations can be overcome with the technique of 'talking stones' in which stones of varying size, shape and colour are used to elicit student views and perceptions (Wearmouth, 2000). Its use is as a simple, informal, hypotheses-generating tool. Instruments of this type mean that concerns such as those mentioned above are of less significance (Clark, 1995). Another very compelling reason for my choice of the 'talking stones' particularly was that the technique allowed the student a measure of control in the interview.

I visited a local beach and chose 18 stones and small pieces of glass in a variety of shapes and colours. The 'talking stones' technique was used in the pilot study with seven students. It was introduced by suggesting that it could be viewed as an abstract technique which might be similar to one used in an English lesson where the students were required, for example, to describe the seasons with colours. Despite my initial concerns that it might be difficult to explain how to implement the exercise, the above example served to clarify the situation and the students, picking up on the idea of colours for the seasons, suggested white, grey, blue for winter etc. Every student understood the exercise with the stones and they were asked to choose a stone:

- which they considered represented themselves. It was made clear to the students that the stone could be chosen to represent any aspect of themselves that they considered to be most important, physically, socially, emotionally, etc. There

were varied responses such as *'this is a small stone and I think that I am probably the smallest person in the year'* or *'this stone is a bright, rusty, reddish colour and I think that I am quite bubbly.'*

- which represented their construction of and relationship to History. Once again the responses were diverse. *'This looks like a really old stone,...'* *'this looks like a plain stone....a bit boring and I don't like History all that much,'* *'I have chosen the green one because it is a nice colour and it is interesting and it looks lively and that is how I see History.'*

The students were asked to place the stone representing themselves on a piece of A1 paper. The size of the paper was chosen arbitrarily as the largest size that could fit on a school desk. They were then initially asked to place the stones chosen for different subjects on the paper to represent;

- their liking for and
- understanding of the subject
- participation generally in the subject

I explained that if the stone for a subject were placed close to the stone representing the student their understanding or liking for the subject would be greater than if the stones were further apart. They were then also asked to place the stone again to indicate what they thought was the teacher's perception of the student's understanding. I was aware that the questions I was asking were based not only on my construction of what was relevant historically, but also my interpretation of what was important to a sense of belonging, and that the data produced would only provide a skeleton answer and not necessarily reflect the students' views. I decided therefore to ask the students for the reasons for their responses. Becker (1998) suggests that when doing this 'how' questions are 'less constraining' and invite respondents *'to answer in any way that suits them, to tell a story that includes whatever they think the story ought to include in order*

to make sense..... and what is important to the story' (Becker, 1998 p.59). I employed this technique but expanded it to include additional probing questions such as '*what makes you say that?*' or '*how is it that you come to think like that?*' or '*what is it about the situation that makes you feel like that?.*' This proved to be a very potent tool and it was in the responses to these questions that the strength of the rich thick data emerged and gave me an insight into the social identities which were being constructed by the students. The above method proved very successful on the pilot study but two amendments and one addition were introduced for the main research.

Using the section on the Likert questionnaire about participation, which had been added after the pilot study, the students were asked to plot their perception, with the stones, of the differences between their participation in groups and that in class work and explain their decisions. This proved to be an exciting development, confirmed the choice of this technique and led to further questioning about participation and its role in understanding. The procedure for recording the students' decisions was clarified by retaining the paper on which to place the stones, but having seven concentric circles already drawn on the paper with the central circle being No. 1 and the outermost circle No.7 representing the most negative perception (Figure 3.2). The number of concentric circles was again arbitrary and simply the amount which could be fitted on the A1 sheet of paper with sufficient space to make short written notes between the lines. The student was then required to place the stones on or within the lines, thus reducing the possibility of misinterpretation when analysing each response. The principle remained the same and the students placed a stone representing themselves in the smallest circle (Circle 1) and then placed the other stones accordingly, so a stone placed in or on circle no 7 would indicate that the student disliked the subject or understood very little of it or that they considered their participation as being minimal.

Teachers

Employing the projective technique the History teachers were asked to plot their perceptions of a student's understanding and participation. Some research suggests that the degree to which there is congruence between the student's own perceptions of their ability and the perception of significant others may be salient in the formation of positive self-esteem (DuBois *et al.*, 1998). In only two cases was there any congruence between the teachers' perceptions of students' understanding and students' self-perceptions.

However, I realised that the technique which I used and the way in which I used it could be open to the criticism that two individuals may not necessarily attribute the same interpretation to the value of the numbers or placing of the stones. I accept this as a valid criticism, but argue that the aim was not to use the technique with precision but as a qualitative tool to generate greater openness in revealing intrapersonal experience of settings and, therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to impose quantitative interpretations upon it.

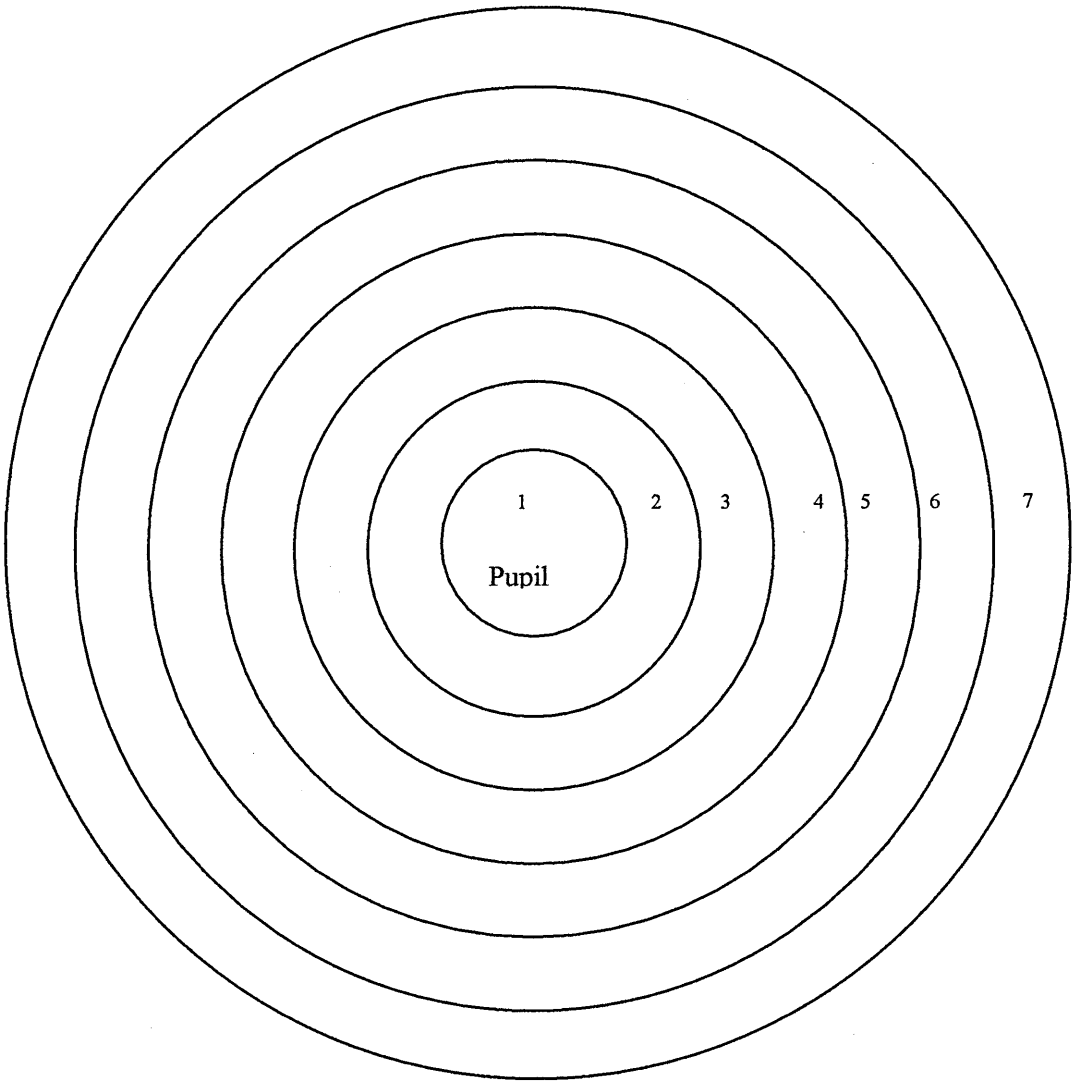
Transparencies were made of the record of 2001 and overlaid on the responses of 2000. This was done for the following reasons; to provide an easily identifiable method of comparison; to enable greater feedback for the students and to encourage greater reflection and prompts on which to base discussion about the reasons for the changes. My initial interpretation of the data generated by the above technique was undertaken after the pilot in consultation with the colleague who devised the technique. The data revealed by this strategy is likely to be tentative and may only provide indications of a person's attitude.

'A single means of evaluating an individual always has potential for distortion and misrepresentation in any appraisal, and even the most reasonable hypothesis generated through projective devices requires substantiation from multiple sources'

(Anastasi, 1988 cited in Clark, 1995 p.313).

Figure 3.2

TALKING STONES



The seven circles and the numbers 1 to 7 within them represent a continuum of the most positive response (no.1) to the most negative (no.7). A student would be asked to place a stone representing herself in the central circle. She was then asked to place a stone representing a subject in another circle. This method was used to track factors such as her liking for a subject, her understanding of it and her participation within lessons. The closer the student placed a stone representing her liking of subject to the stone which represented herself the more the student liked the subject. So, for example, if she placed the stone in the second circle she liked the subject more than if she had placed it in the fifth circle.

Settings – ‘Taking part in and being part of’ - Video and observation

I considered that the videos and observation which I intended to undertake were vital to provide evidence at the setting level of moment to moment dyadic and wider interpersonal interaction between students and of the teachers’ practices. The four students were from three different tutor groups and were taught in Year 8 by Mr. Tudor. Videos were made of History lessons with these groups to consider their participation and used as a basis for discussion in interviews to investigate their understanding. The video undertaken on the pilot was of limited usefulness as it took place in only one lesson where the students were mainly engaged in a question and answer session with intermittent short discussion and written exercises. When analysing the video it became clear that to investigate the students’ responses thoroughly it would be necessary to video lessons in which a variety of activities would take place and analyse the students’ attitudes and responses to the various stimuli. I negotiated with Mr. Tudor who taught the four students in Year 8 that the lessons to be videoed for the main research should include a variety of activities. He was extremely supportive and amenable to my suggestions and made a point of ensuring that there was a selection of contrasting activities in the lessons to be studied.

Due to school organisation one of the lessons videoed in Year 8 was at the end of one programme of study – ‘The Making of the U.K.’, while the others were at the beginning of another, ‘The Expansion of Trade and Industry’. This meant that one student would be questioned on a lesson which was concerned with social issues, the beggars of Bristol, while the others were questioned on a comparison between Manchester in 1750 with the same town in 1900. It is possible that the social issues and the situation of the beggars in the first lesson would be more accessible to students than the content of the second, and the difference in material may have contributed to the findings which indicated a greater grasp by that student of the subject matter. The students were then interviewed

individually after the videoed lesson on their understanding of the content of the lesson. The interviews were taped and transcripts made.

In Year 9 the staff who taught the students were Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart. Due to the modular nature of the Humanities organisation when it was time for the videos to be taken, Mr. Tudor taught two of the students and Mr. Stuart two. Although Mr. Tudor was enthusiastic and supportive about the use of video, Mr. Stuart was less so. Neither did he wish me to use an audiotape in the lesson and preferred me to just observe. This I did and made notes on the organisation of the lesson, the participation of the two students and their interaction with the rest of the students. It was difficult, however, when working alone and making notes about the participation of both students, to capture the quality of Mr. Stuart's responses in the same way as those of Mr. Tudor. This has resulted in my observation being about Mr. Stuart's practice generally with only one or two examples of his conversation, rather than the rich data which I was able to obtain from those lessons taught by Mr. Tudor which I was able to video and study later. The focus of the lessons, which all the groups were studying at this time, was on the impact of flight on the Twentieth Century. Once again the modular nature of the Year 9 Humanities curriculum meant that when the video and observation was undertaken those students who were taught by Mr. Tudor were studying the impact of flight on the Second World War, while those taught by Mr. Stuart were studying the impact of flight on the First World War.

Interviews with students on understanding of the lesson

These interviews took place as soon as possible after the lesson which had been videoed or observed. The object of these interviews was to investigate the students' construction of History and understanding of the lesson having observed their participation in the History setting. In this exercise I had decided to employ as much 'scaffolding' (Wood,

1994) as was necessary for each student. Extensive help was given for this exercise and I issued several leading questions to the students to enable them to take any hypotheses as far as they could. Despite the differences in the subject matter of the lessons considered in Years 8 and 9, the format of the questioning remained the same.

- 1) Each student was required to read an extract from the History text which had been used in the lesson.
- 2) The students were asked to remember and explain the terms used in the lesson and place the period in the correct century (Key Element 5 a) (DfE, 1995).
- 3) Identify a textual sources as primary (written at the time) or secondary (written about the event, but as a commentary at a later date).
- 4) In discussion with me to move towards Key Element 2B 'to describe, analyse and explain reasons for and results of the historical events, situations and changes in the period studied' (DfE, 1995).

Sample

Teachers

Mr. Dale – Head of Humanities Faculty

Mr. Tudor – Head of History department, later to become Head of Faculty

Mr. Stuart – History teacher

Mrs. King – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

Students in the pilot study

In 1999 I undertook a pilot study with seven students from a 'Foundation' group for Humanities in Year 9 who had been identified as having need of additional support. These students were taught by Mr. Tudor, the Head of the History Department. The pilot group comprised three girls and four boys. The three girls and two of the boys had

learning difficulties which were predominantly problems with literacy. The other two boys were placed in the group due to behavioural problems in Year 8. The behaviour of these two boys had inhibited their learning in Year 8, but they were both able readers, extremely articulate and had few, if any, difficulties, with the concepts involved in History. I decided, therefore, that although their perceptions were interesting, these students fell outside the scope of this study, and the main study would eschew those students with behavioural problems unless these were directly connected with problems with literacy. Although the students in the pilot study were in the school to be considered, they were in Year 9 and therefore would not be involved in the main research.

Students in the main research

For the first stage of the main research the questionnaire on outside communities and questionnaire on preferred ways of working were administered to a year group of 230 students in Year 8. The resulting data were analysed and from this 32 students were chosen to cover the whole ability range. Twelve of these students had learning difficulties with eight of them on the SEN register (DfEE, 1994) for problems with literacy. The completed questionnaires formed the basis of individual interviews with all 32 students. The interviews also included a projective technique. I decided from the data from these interviews that I would choose twelve students to study, six of whom experienced difficulties with literacy and six who did not as a comparison.

It became clear by the autumn term of the third year of the research, after I had transcribed the audiotapes and continued to analyse the data, that far too much data would be produced for the scope and time allowed for the research. I decided, therefore, after consideration of the data from the interviews with these twelve students and discussion with my supervisors that only four students who experienced difficulties with literacy would be chosen to be the main subjects of the research and the focus of the

presentation of findings. I realised that working within a sociocultural framework demanded that to understand the situation of students with special educational needs those students who have not been labelled as such should also be considered. However I had realised that the very rich data which had been produced would provide for a study in depth rather than breadth.

The four students chosen were from three different tutor groups and the choice of these particular students with learning difficulties (two boys and two girls), all of whom were on the SEN register, was made to give a spread of widely differing backgrounds, interests and hobbies and on their responses to the projective technique, particularly on their perceptions of participation in class and group work. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs. King and two History teachers, Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart were interviewed in Year 8. Additionally, the Head of Faculty, Mr. Dale, a Geographer was interviewed, but subsequently left at the end of the Christmas Term 2000. In Year 9 the two History teachers were involved in teaching the four students and were interviewed.

Ethical issues and dilemmas

Griffiths (1998) argues that the principles on which her research for social justice is founded are themselves underpinned by a view of ethics which is based upon

‘an equal respect for and appreciation of every individual; a recognition that persons are constructed and interpret themselves in relation to power relations in society, and they have real choices about how to do this; and an understanding that there are no hard and fast rules or certainties to be had, so moral decisions are always judgements in particular contexts’

(p.135).

I was aware that students generally constructed their identities '*in relation to power relations in society*,' particularly those of the arena of school and the factors, both outside and within school, which determine that they are required to spend thirty nine weeks of each year in an environment in which they may or may not wish to be. I was also aware that the students in Cullishaven School who would become the participants in the research may be especially sensitive to the unequal power relations which existed in their own, often difficult, learning situations. I did not wish to contribute to this by appearing to be an authority figure and therefore making the students feel that the research was something into which they were being coerced against their will simply to satisfy me, as a researcher, or the whole process being seen as another diktat by the authorities in the arena (Oates, 2006).

I was unsure how I could overcome this, but discussed it with Mr. Dale, Head of the Humanities Faculty and Mr. Tudor. They suggested that I should go into all the Year 8 History lessons and explain the research to the students. Mr. Dale and Mr. Tudor assured me that students were used to completing questionnaires about their hobbies in Personal, Social and Health Education lessons. Therefore, I attended the History lessons and explained that, although I would like everyone to complete the initial questionnaires which had no contentious issues in them, only four students from each form would be chosen at random for the subsequent interviews. It was stressed that no student was forced to participate and that each of them should feel completely free to refuse. At that stage I had intended to use some students who did not experience problems with literacy as a comparison cohort, so the research was explained as being undertaken through the auspices of the Open University and was concerned with students' experiences in the History classroom and their understanding of the subject. I explained that the research would involve the students completing two questionnaires in Years 8 and 9 and then participating in two interviews in each year. It was also made clear that

the completion of the questionnaires and the interviews would take place in Humanities lessons and therefore the students would not be withdrawn from any other lessons. I also explained that videos would be made of History lessons.

After the first two sets of questionnaires had been completed and I had chosen the 32 students to interview I went into lessons again to tell the students who had been chosen and to give each of these students a letter to their parents. This letter was typed by the school secretary on Cullishaven School headed paper. The letters detailed the information which they had been given previously in the lessons and the students were asked to return the letters with parental agreement. It was explained in the lessons and also included in the letters that, although students' names would be on the initial questionnaires for the interviews, in any subsequent publication or dissemination of the information they would be assigned historical names to protect their anonymity. It was also explained that neither the school, nor the county in which it is situated, would be identifiable. The letters were signed by Mr. Tudor and countersigned by me. The students were also told that they would not be allowed to participate without parental consent. Many of the other students were disappointed at not being included in the research and queried why they had not been chosen and I spent some time explaining that the choice had been random. This situation raised for me the issue of honesty in field relations (Griffiths, 1998), and I felt distinctly uncomfortable but felt unable, for the sake of the students concerned, to reveal that some students from each class had been chosen specifically because they experienced difficulties with literacy.

I am aware, as an ex- teacher and a parent, that 'satchel post' is not always reliable, and I left extra copies of the letters for parents with Mr. Tudor to deal with contingencies such as lost letters. However, with the exception of one or two students all the letters were returned with the parents' agreement. Mr. Tudor informed me that when he told the

classes the dates that I was to return, those students who had not brought back their letters asked for copies and returned them in time for the next lesson. I was heartened by this, but felt an enormous responsibility over making sure that the research was carried out properly and ethically.

The question of whether consent can really be informed is raised by Oates (2006) questioning whether children understand fully all that is involved. Additionally, there is the question of whether at the beginning of the research, when it is explained to the possible participants, the researcher can anticipate how the project will develop and its possible effects (Eisner, 1998). I could see no way of dealing completely satisfactorily with the second issue, but explained to the students at each interview that if they felt uncomfortable with the direction that the research was taking, were unhappy with any of the questions or did not wish to continue at any time, they could simply speak to Mr. Tudor to that effect and they could withdraw from the research. I dealt with the first issue as far as I could by asking if there were any questions at the introductory sessions and in each class in which the questionnaires were completed. I also asked each of the students in the interviews whether they understood what was involved in the research and whether they were happy to continue. All agreed to do so.

I had agreed with the teachers that I would not reveal anything that the students said at the interviews unless I considered information which they had given me indicated that they were in danger or were suffering. I was keenly aware of the ethical necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of the students, but asked their permission to convey, in the most general sense, minor perceptions of the modules and learning activities which took place in the classroom and which might inform practice. I had mentioned generally to the Head of Faculty that the students with difficulties felt that they needed more time to complete tasks to ensure that large tracts of work did not remain unfinished, an

experience, common to those with this type of difficulty (Male *et al.*, 1985). Some weeks later the Head of Faculty commented that he had remembered this and had tried to implement it in his classroom. I realised that I was responsible for mediating this situation, but there was a '*commitment to the students which would not allow total detachment from their interests*' (Porter, 1984 cited in Anzul, 1991 p.197).

I had been aware that I might experience conflicts in my perceptions of my current role with the students. As a teacher I had been not only a facilitator, but had also found myself in the role of confidante, often expected to intervene in situations to improve them. I knew that the self-esteem of students who experienced learning difficulties was often fragile, (Davies *et al.*, 1995; Valas, 1999) and I sensed a vulnerability in many of the students. I also understood that the undivided attention given to the respondents in an interview could contribute to a sense of self-worth, but could also foster a situation where emotions, perhaps unwanted, might rise to the surface (Atkinson, 1997).

Additionally, as the research progressed I questioned whether any benefits were accruing to the students, apart from the unaccustomed facility of discussing their problems. I was under no misapprehension that giving them 'a voice' would '*automatically improve the quality of their life*' (Riddell *et al.*, 1998 p.79). Indeed, I was initially concerned that the discussions might unearth tensions which the school might be unable to resolve. All students with problems commented that they found the process helpful, stating variously, '*it helps to think about it like this*', '*it helps to think about myself in a different way.*' Friedman (1991) suggests that qualitative methodology is not the methodology, '*for those who wish their research to be cut-and dried, bareboned, or devoid of emotional intensity*' (p.132). My own experience in this research has endorsed this. Although I had explained to the students that I had been a teacher and was now undertaking research, they clearly did not consider this to be a barrier. One commented that he saw me as

'someone I can talk to.' During interviews I used prompts from the interview schedule, but explained that I did not want to interrupt them unnecessarily and urged them to let their responses 'flow'. I was startled by the amount of sensitive information revealed by the students using the projective technique and, occasionally, I wondered whether they realised just how much they were, *'exposing – defences down, trust established'* (Friedman, 1991 p.117). At these stages I asked the students whether they wished the tape to be turned off and some did so.

I did not give transcripts of the students' interviews to the students, as when typed these extended to approximately thirty pages, some even longer and I was concerned about the difficulties that the students might have in reading the text, and my actually receiving feedback and gaining access once again to the students. I had originally intended to give the students feedback at the end of the fieldwork and subsequent analysis. However, this was not possible due to my own ill health and subsequent lengthy suspensions from my studies due to this. The resulted in the analysis not being completed until after the students had left the school, a situation which I regret. I gave transcripts of the interviews with the teachers to them and asked them to make any comments or suggest any amendments which they thought necessary. None did so.

The teachers were colleagues with whom I had worked and for whom I still felt professional regard. Not for me then, the option open to some researchers, of collecting data, never to return, regarded by some as *'smash and grab ethnography'* (Hitchcock *et al.*, 1989 p.40). I was still seen as a colleague and, as such, was trusted and respected as I had been when teaching at the school. While this was reassuring, I felt distinctly uncomfortable at being what Griffiths (1998) describes as an *'insider'* who has *'gone over to the academy.....and taken on its values, attitudes and beliefs to the extent that they are no longer true insiders'* (p.137). Despite their being hard pressed, the teachers

provided unstinting and enthusiastic co-operation for the research, allowing students to leave lessons whenever it was necessary to interview them. This magnanimous attitude only served to fuel my feelings of disloyalty if adverse comments were made by the students and if I witnessed practices which I considered led to marginalisation for the students therefore restricting the learning available to them. This feeling was further compounded by the fact that I knew that I must record this in the thesis.

I had experienced the difficulties facing the staff; the impossibility of trying to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum while organising lessons which were stimulating, and attempting to consider the needs of each student, yet struggling to teach, perhaps three hundred different students each week. By working with them I had already become aware of, '*generally undisclosed vulnerabilities, heartaches, fantasies and joys*' (Friedman, 1991 p.112). I knew, at first hand, their concern for students who shared the problems of the major subjects of the research, and it was this knowledge which engendered a naïve hope that the responses of the students would always have a positive element which would somehow obliquely reward the efforts of the staff, although only I would be aware of this. My altered professional identity was presenting problems in my view of the relationship with the staff that I had not anticipated at the beginning of the research. The very real feeling of community, which I had shared with the teachers, became a spectre throughout not only the fieldwork but also through the analysis and final stage of writing up, and served to create a constant inner battle to ensure that my research adopted a critical stance and did not result in my interpretations and conclusions being merely supportive of existing systems (Bines, 2000).

Data Analysis

The aim of the analysis was to identify which critical events in the lives of four very different students with four very different backgrounds contributed to their participation,

learning and construction of social identities. I decided that to do this I must consider these critical events in relation to the arena of school and also the settings which take place within it. Within these levels I would then consider whether those critical events were represented at one or more of what Rogoff (1995) considers are '*three planes of focus in sociocultural activity – community/institutional, interpersonal and personal*' (p.141). Rogoff (1995) argues that each of these planes must be considered when studying individual development and that these planes should not be seen as being in any hierarchical formation,

'but as simply involving different grains of focus with the whole sociocultural activity. To understand each requires the involvement of the others. Distinguishing them serves the function of clarifying the plane of focus that may be chosen for one or another discussion of processes in the whole activity, holding the other planes of focus in the background but not separated'

(p.141).

I decided that the scope of the research did not allow me to consider the effect of the development of the students on the larger community plane, i.e. that of the arena of school. However, I decided to tailor this plane to consider whether the development of any individuals was having an effect, at the smaller community level, i.e. that of the community of schooled historians set within the smaller arena of school in which their learning was taking place. I realised that it might be possible, although unlikely, that this could be considered by the students at the intrapersonal level. However, it was easier to investigate this from the intrapersonal perspective of the teachers, who had been able to consider the longer term interpersonal interactions of the students and any implications of these, not only for the community of schooled historians under consideration, but also for any in the future.

I decided on this course for my initial analysis of data. The data which the interviews had provided was very rich and I continually revisited the transcripts of the audiotapes while listening to the tapes themselves. Listening to the tapes again ensured that I was aware of any intonations which the transcripts did not reveal. I also read and re-read the field notes from my journal. It was while undertaking this process that I realised that the usual method of initial 'generation' of codes and categories was not going to unearth the quality of the students' responses and I might give interpretations which were not worthy of the depth of feeling which the students had expressed. I continued to revisit, examine and meditate on the data, constantly adjusting my interpretations and was aware of the emergence of what Lacey (1976) suggests is a '*spiral of understanding*' (Lacey, 1976, p.61 cited in Woods, 1986, p.120). '*Insights were "escalated" through moving backwards and forwards between observation and analysis and understanding*' (p.61), and in this way I was enabled not to impose meaning, but to negotiate meaning with the very rich data.

It was only after reading Griffiths' (2005) material about considering practices from a feminist perspective that I decided to reconsider the way I had analysed the data. This decision was inconvenient at this late stage, but I felt compelled to do so not only for the sake of the students, but also for what I considered was the integrity of the research. I decided to retain the original analytical framework but incorporate the more nuanced analysis by identifying representations of the principles of embodiment, diversity and structures of power within the arena of school and the settings within it.

Presenting the findings

I had originally decided to write up the data about the students as their narratives. However, I realised that this was not going to be possible within the analytical framework that I had argued for, because the story was not just about how they see themselves and

their identities, although the intrapersonal view is very important, but also how the reality that they experience could be set within the social contexts in which they experience it (LeCompte, 1993). I decided that I would have to write it in a form which would be congruent with the notion of a narrative. It would, however, be a process of narrative to create meaning through the triangulation of the intrapersonal views of the students and the teachers with my interpretations of these and my observations of the students' interpersonal actions in the settings of the History classroom. The lessons which were observed are written in detail in the stories of the students, although they were the same lessons in three instances. This has been done to show how the events in the lessons impacted on the individual students.

Carrying out the research

A detailed timetable for carrying out the research can be seen in Appendix F. The Research started in 1999. The second half of the Spring Term and the first half of the Summer term of that year was taken up with negotiating access into Cullishaven School and administering questionnaires and carrying out the interviews with the staff and students, analysing the data from these interviews and refining questionnaires in preparation for the main study. The main study started in the second half of the Summer term of that year with discussions with staff about their perceptions about the successes and failures of ability grouping. The second year of the research which started in the Spring Term of 2000 concentrated on administering questionnaires, interviewing staff and students in Year 8 and observing and videoing lessons. This continued through to the end of the Summer Term. The transcripts of the interviews were typed up and the data analysed during the Autumn Term of 2000. The third year of the research was conducted throughout the Spring and Summer Terms of 2001 when the students were in Year 9 in the Foundation group ability setting and, as in 2000, consisted of repeating questionnaires, interviewing staff and students and observing lessons. The Autumn Term of 2001 was taken up with typing up the second set of audiotapes, and analysing the data from these.

Problems encountered in the research

“The public sharing of insights, reasoning, emotions, changes, consistencies – whatever – is done in the service of helping the readers ‘to be there’ with the researcher to understand, and to make their own assessment of the research in informal ways

(McCormack Steinmetz, 1991 p.176)

I realised that my data would require analysis to be undertaken with a degree of detachment, a concept foreign to me as a classroom practitioner. I was also aware that *‘my own insertion in this particular culture; the organism that was/is me would... inevitably mediate whatever I saw and felt*

(Clough, 1995 p.134).

I decided, therefore, albeit with initial reluctance, to reveal the unsettling emotions I had suffered.

As the research progressed it became increasingly important to proclaim and celebrate my experiences in the classroom. These areas are of such salience that not only the research topic, but methods and outcomes may be affected (Bines, 1995). The memory of these experiences was to be a two-edged sword, constructing a dissonance between my perception of the responses of the participants and the maintenance of objectivity when analysing the data. There were times when I resented objectivity as an intrusion which denied the philosophy of empathising with my students which had served me so well in the past. Its existence implied that,

‘what or who is studied is passive and that enquirers can and should undertake analyses from the perspective of a reality that does not interact with that inhabited by the objects of their studies’

(Potts, 1998 p.20)

However the awareness of my problems served to make me question constantly the justification of my interpretations, and to be self-critical, an uncomfortable, but necessary exercise (Williams, 1997). It was in this area that I found the work of Teri Friedman (1991) helpful. Her work reassured me that my discomfort and feelings of impotence about the sense of isolation and frustration expressed by the students were not new and had been experienced by others. I too, like one of her students, wanted to, *'jump in and soothe wounds, but I needed to step back and observe'* (p.117). I was keenly aware of the disappointment of one student in this research who commented:

'the teachers say they understand my difficulties, but how can they know what it is like to have these problems. They wouldn't be teachers if they had them.'

Like Friedman's student I found the *'conflict to be very powerful and very disturbing'* (p.117). One method of coming to terms with this was the use of extensive notes in my research journal. Another was of co-opting my husband to undertake the role of debriefer. My supervisors were unfailingly supportive, but working at a distance of 280 miles generated its own complications.

My journal also served as a repository for notes on brief conversations with teachers or assistants about events which involved the students. The Head of Learning Support revealed that a student, for whom I felt great concern, had used a lighter to burn a girl's arm. I was aware of my feeling of disappointment at this action of a student who, in interview, had appeared sensitive and aware of other people's feelings. Friedman suggests that this disappointment is not uncommon with the researcher discovering,

'facets of the persons being studied that the researcher would prefer not to see, facets that must be dealt with nonetheless' (p.115).

It was clear that there were other dimensions to this student who expressed a feeling of isolation in some lessons and saw himself as *'the little boy in the corner.'* There were

obviously other influences present outside the History classroom not only for this student but for all the others and I realised that, despite the students displaying an openness in the interviews that I had not anticipated, the research may have provided only a partial and imperfect picture of these students.

PART TWO

In Part Two of this thesis I describe Cullishaven School and introduce the four staff and four students, Henry, Eleanor, Mathilda and William who were participants in this research and use the data collected to tell the stories of the students. Mathilda and Henry were in tutor group C and were in the same 'Cullis' Foundation ability group in Year 9. Eleanor was in tutor group H and William in tutor group A and were in the same 'Haven' Foundation group in Year 9. Each of the students was on the Special Educational Needs register of Cullishaven School. The stages on the register ranged from 1 to 5, depending on the severity of the difficulties which a student experienced, with 1 being slight to 5 being specific, such as dyslexia and the most severe. The stage at which a student was placed also determined the amount of additional teaching help they would receive, depending on the financial resources allocated from outside the arena of school, but distributed within the school. Once again those students at Stage 1 would receive very little help, while those on Stage 5 should receive more.

CHAPTER 4

The School as a constellation of practices

In this chapter I describe the physical features of the areas under consideration i.e. the school and the Humanities Faculty, discuss teachers' views of school practices in relation to grouping by ability and then consider their views of these practices in the context of the Humanities Faculty and its approach to timetabling. This provides a backdrop of potential influences on the individual teachers, Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart who orchestrate the settings in which the students in the sample are part. The final part of the chapter is the teachers' accounts of their practice in relation to their special needs students and their reflections of the impact of the grouping on their practice and on the students and their learning. The findings here are related to arena issues and to the views of pedagogy and learning discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

4.1 Views of arena practices

4.1.1 The School

Physical environment and working practices

The research was located in a purpose built 11-16 comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of a town in a largely rural county. The county has a high level of socio-economic deprivation, with the proportion of adults in the higher socio-economic categories being well below that nationally as is the proportion of adults with higher education qualifications. The school however, which has 1200 students on roll, serves a catchment area of four wards with a wide social mix with one of the wards being disadvantaged on all the social indicators except ethnic minorities, while the other three wards are advantaged, compared with national averages. The school is situated on a green field site with tennis courts and several acres of playing fields. The school buildings are well maintained and the corridors and classrooms are light and airy. The

students' work is displayed prominently in the entrance vestibule and along the corridors. The arena practices of the school encourage a mutual trust between staff and students. As evidence that staff consider students as responsible and trustworthy, an open-school policy is operated with students being allowed access during break times and lunch times to all classrooms other than those areas which might prove hazardous, such as Science laboratories or Home Economics rooms.

The majority of the school is built on one level with the exception of the Mathematics block. The general staffroom is also situated on the second level of the building in an area which, on the ground floor, houses the library, the offices of one of the deputy heads and two of the senior teachers, the lecture theatre and music rooms. The staffroom is reached via a staircase which is fronted by double doors. Students needing to speak to a member of staff are required to wait at these double doors until a member of staff arrives. The school buildings had been adapted in the 1980s to accommodate wheelchairs, and ramps, lifts and specialist toilet and shower facilities had been added, and during any school year there is at least one student who uses these.

The school had enjoyed strong and supportive leadership from the headteachers who had been employed since 1977. None of the headteachers fell into the role which Ball (1987) considers some undertake. *'It is possible and not uncommon to find the managerial head in the role of desk-bound bureaucrat, administering from behind the closed door of the office'* (p.99). All had a teaching commitment, although reduced. While, an 'open-door' policy was maintained by the headteacher for all staff, the day to day running of the school operated on a more formal managerial structure through a system of academic and pastoral teams. It worked largely as suggested by Ball (1987),

'Specifications go on to outline in detail, in classical Weberian manner, the responsibilities of the other members of the senior management team, the heads of

department, year tutors, form teachers and some of the ancillary staff of the school.....Matters arising and matters of issue will be discussed within formal meetings (e.g. pastoral board, academic board, staff association, senior management team) and information and opinion will flow through the established channels of communication'
(p.97).

The school had experienced an Ofsted inspection in 1997 and was due to have another in 2002. The report from the 1997 inspection had praised the school as being very effective overall with high expectations of the students from the staff. It was considered that the school was well led, and there were high standards of attainment and behaviour in a school community where it was seen that the staff, students, parents and governors shared a common set of values and aspirations. Of the teaching inspected 98% ranged from satisfactory to excellent and there were no key issues to be addressed, other than one which bears on this study and which is located in the Humanities area of the school curriculum. This was that insufficient time was considered to be allocated for Religious Education at Key Stages 3 and 4 for students aged 11-16 years. Action was taken by the Humanities Faculty to rectify this and the reorganisation consequently affected the timetabling of all the Humanities subjects and the distribution of the teaching staff, thus impacting on the classroom settings.

Special educational need and provision

In 1997 there were 100 students on the school's register of special educational needs, with 36 of these students with a statement of special educational need. It is estimated that nationally about 20 % of students may have a special educational need at some time, with 2% of students nationally having a special educational need of greater severity which requires a statutory statement of special educational needs (DfEE, 1994). While the 100 students at Cullishaven School represented a smaller proportion at 9.5% than

nationally, it can be seen that the 36 students with a statement of special educational need represented 3% of the school population. By 2001, the figures had risen to 164 (15.75%) students on the school's register of special educational needs of whom 42 (3.5%) had a Statement of Special Educational Need.

It was considered by the inspection team of 1997 that the resources of the school were barely adequate and were significantly below the national average, with reserves being used to maintain the standard of educational provision. While the school was praised as providing excellent value for money it meant that these low resources had resulted in a high pupil/staff ratio. Although the resources were used effectively across the curriculum there was uneven support for students with special needs and this was particularly evident in the Humanities area, a factor which emerged strongly in the research.

Views of grouping by ability

It was clear that there was support in the Humanities Faculty for some form of setting by ability but I was interested in the views of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs. King, towards to this type of grouping generally, particularly as she had access to the majority of students who experienced difficulties. I decided to interview her in the first year of the research before discussing the issue further with the Humanities Faculty. Mrs. King, who was an English teacher explained that although there was mixed ability teaching in English in Year 7 it had been the practice to employ grouping by ability in Year 8. This practice was, however, to be stopped because it was the perception of the English staff that the banding system generally produced '*a lot of negative self-esteem*' amongst those students who were placed in the lower bands, and these students were perceived as becoming '*quite introverted*.' There would be additional support staff in the mixed ability groupings. It appeared that, by their practices, the teachers in the

English Faculty acknowledged and subscribed to the importance of supporting the social aspects of learning, and they believed that in a setted ability situation those students who had special educational needs were not enjoying the sort of interaction with other more articulate students which led to collaboration and scaffolding. Mrs. King voiced the opinion that:

'you can only learn if your self-esteem is there and you are given the opportunity when you are young to think, "Well, where am I?" but to be told that you are mediocre and not very good actually does them a great disservice. I also think that splitting up children is no better than the 11 plus² and is two schools within one school. There are more losers than winners.'

I asked Mrs. King what she considered were the greatest problems in classroom settings for students who experienced difficulties. She explained that having been a teacher who not only taught English to whole classes, but also acted in a support role to other teachers, she had witnessed that life at school for these students was *'boring a lot of the time.'*

This was because for only a small proportion of the time did they have any work that *'they can get their teeth into... .. mainly active tasks in which they can participate.'*

The second problem was the difficulty that the students experienced in engaging with the tools of each subject such as textual material. This she considered was dealt with more successfully in a mixed ability situation in which the more able readers would open practice to other students by supporting their reading.

'On a table where there are two good readers and one that is not that good but doesn't mind having a go and there is one that is really unsure... they will take it in turns and the other one can follow.'

She also suggested that there was a strong supportive bond between students who had difficulties.

² This refers to the examination which was taken by students in the last year of the primary school and used extensively in the tripartite system to select students for grammar school.

'The poor readers help their friends and they will say "Oh, so and so will read it to me or I will copy his notes" and they are really good at helping each other out.'

I suggest that these comments illustrate the mutually dependent relationships, argued in Chapter 1, which may develop between students who do not feel that they belong to a community of readers, but who nevertheless feel a sense of belonging with other 'people like us' who experience similar difficulties.

Wenger (1998) argues that *'participation always organises itself around reification because it always involves artefacts, words and concepts that allow it to proceed,'* (p.67) and I sought Mrs. King's view about whether students could enjoy some success with a differentiated text if there were sufficient funding for additional resources. Mrs. King rejected this idea because of the possibility in a mixed ability situation of a *'negative undercurrent being set up,'* of which the teachers might not be aware and reaction from peers drawing attention to and making more public the difficulties of the students by making comments, such as *'Oh yes, you have chosen a "thicko book have you?"'* She did, however, concede that in a settled situation it could be possible. I had insufficient time to expand on this situation in the interview but was interested in the subtle gradations of power or inconsistencies which might be enacted by participants which were suggested by Mrs. King. There appeared to be no problem of potential negative feedback in a peer tutoring situation for those students who did not experience difficulties giving reading support on a shared text to those who did. However, negative feedback was anticipated if students experiencing difficulties were offered the supportive mechanisms of differentiated texts to enhance their participation and their competence in using the tools/reifications of the community of literacy learners. Mrs. King also explained that the Mathematics Faculty did not employ mixed ability groupings in Years 7, 8 and 9. Instead students were organised into five ability groupings with one being a very small group of around six students with special educational needs. In Years 10 and

11 the setting was slightly less rigid and the students were *'mixed up a little bit more'* with most of the education support teachers being assigned to these years.

I asked Mrs. King about any discussion which the students might have had with her about their Humanities lessons and the practices which contributed to the settings. Mrs. King revealed that *'some of the students with special needs love History and Geography, but a lot of them have difficulties.'* There appeared to be three main obstacles to students' participation. The greatest of these was the fact that some teachers did not modify their practice to accommodate the students' difficulties. They set too fast a pace for the lessons resulting in the students not being able to keep up with copying material from the board, thus restricting their sustained access to active involvement and negotiation of meaning. Mutuality, according to Wenger (1998) is a pre-requisite for participation and it depends on having the right to and feeling able to negotiate meaning. As Mrs King commented,

'There's a lot of verbal input and I think copying is problematic for a lot of children who have literacy problems because they can't read the sentence on the board and copy it down. They lose their place and then it takes them twice as long.'

As noted in Chapter 2, the enactment by the school of the National Curriculum is affected by initiatives outside the arena of school such as the introduction of league tables leading sometimes to inclusion of excessive amounts of information in lessons. Mrs. King argued that this meant that the content of some lessons was *'a bit overloaded'* and the students were unable to decide which the most salient features were, a point raised by Cunnah (2000) and *'worried that they have to do all of the stuff that the class do.'* Mrs. King suggested that support staff might be able to direct the students to the most important issues of the lesson. The final problem for the students was homework, particularly if it were a writing based homework. Mrs. King explained that

'a lot of the students with special needs can't remember what has gone on in the lesson and because a lot of them don't come from homes where they know what's going on, it's quite hard for them.'

Having gained a brief overview of the problems experienced by the students generally I then turned to the arena of the research, the Humanities Faculty.

4.1.2 The Humanities Faculty Physical environment and working practices

The Humanities Faculty rooms had originally been in a suite of five classrooms a short distance from the entrance vestibule of the school, but considerably further from the main staffroom. For this reason one of the two additional rooms allocated for storage was used as a small staffroom for the Humanities staff. This was behind one of the classrooms and was therefore accessible to students. It was noticeable during the time that I undertook the research and joined the staff for coffee or lunch that the students took full advantage of this accessibility to contact staff. In 2000 extensive building work was undertaken in the school generally and the Humanities area was extended to incorporate an extra classroom in the main building and two classrooms in a new annexe. These two new classrooms housed the religious education department. The staff of the Humanities Faculty comprised two full time specialists in each of the subjects of geography, History and religious education. Additionally there was a part-time teacher who taught History and religious education. Timetable requirements meant that, in addition to their specialist subjects, Humanities staff were required on occasions to teach another Humanities subject at Key Stage 3.

Perceptions of institutional practices associated with subject status and their impact

I interviewed Mr. Dale, the Head of the Humanities Faculty, Mr. Tudor the head of History and Mr. Stuart, the other full-time history teacher in 1999, the first year of the

research, and Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart in the second and third years. Members of the faculty considered that other staff and parents perceived Humanities subjects to be an important part of the curriculum. They were not, however, seen to be as significant as the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. The Head of the Humanities Faculty commented that Humanities subjects suffered from being seen of secondary importance for two reasons. Firstly, *'the foundation is the periphery really, they are the peripheral subjects....Parents look on the core subjects as being most important and in that sense we do come second.'* Secondly, parents had been affected by influences operating at the level of the social order beyond the arena of school, such as the introduction in 1996 of compulsory Design and Technology courses and other vocationally orientated courses. These influences had, Mr. Dale believed, encouraged parents and students to consider subjects for Key Stage 4 which would lead directly into employment or training. These vocationally orientated subjects were seen to *'have more value – more obvious value,'* and this had affected the uptake of Humanities at Key Stage 4.

The Humanities curriculum was not only affected by influences outside the arena of school, but also by the enduring practices at the arena level itself. Mr. Dale was strongly of the opinion that not only was the view held by parents, students and some staff, that Humanities was of lesser value than vocationally orientated subjects, but this view also appeared to be held by the member of the senior management team whose role it was to timetable the curriculum. Mr. Dale commented, *'when the timetabler puts the timetable together Humanities is quite often one of the last things to be put in.'* In this way the practices at the school arena level mediated what the Humanities could implement and achieve. An example of this was the manner in which resources were allocated, not only financially, but also with regards to staffing. Mr. Dale explained:

'English, Science and Maths, for example,for each half year group with four tutor groups in each half year group, they have an extra member of staff and can

actually make five groups out of the four, whereas when it comes to Humanities we have just got the four groups, so if we want to set we have to set within the groups with the four members of staff. Extra staffing makes a considerable difference, I think, but we do not have it...It also means that we haven't got the amount of staff to put in the support where it is needed with the students who have difficulties.'

This provision contrasted with that described by Mrs. King in English where additional support was to be used in the mixed ability groupings to help those students with special educational needs, and also in Mathematics where there was extensive use of support.

The concerns of the Head of Faculty with the staff/pupil ratio were echoed by Mr. Tudor (who later became Head of Faculty and was responsible for the finances of the department). He was also very worried that many of the History textbooks in the department had been purchased when the National Curriculum was first introduced in 1989 and *'teaching and learning had moved on a lot since then and to buy a set of textbooks for two GCSE classes would use up the year's budget.'* This problem was also acute in the Geography and Religious Education departments and meant that classroom teachers were spending a disproportionate amount of their time producing additional resources. He explained,

'None of our children.....bar those at GCSE have a text book. You could argue that there aren't any good text books around anyway for there to be ONE book, but there is no child that goes out of a History, Geography or RE lesson with a text book in their bag.'

Perceptions of Faculty practices and their impact

In 1998 The Humanities Faculty at Cullishaven School had experimented with setting Year 9 students by ability. These students with special educational needs were in classes of 22-23, while the mainstream groups had 30-32 students and the 'express groups' i.e.

those considered to be of high ability were in classes of 34-36 students. When I interviewed Mr. Dale, Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart in 1999, the first year of the research, Mr. Tudor explained that a great deal of time had been spent in the initial stages of the settled organisation '*making a conscious drive to raise the esteem of the students.*' Time had been taken to reassure students that the reason for this structure had been because the staff in the Humanities Faculty had wanted to give the students '*a very good deal.*' The three teachers were of the opinion that the Humanities staff generally believed that the increased motivation and participation for students with special educational needs had occurred mainly because of greater peer support for these students than had been evident in a mixed ability situation. This mutual support experienced between those students who experienced difficulties had also been noted by Mrs. King, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. Other staff in the Humanities Faculty also observed an increase in confidence and self-esteem amongst the students in these smaller groups. Mr. Dale was convinced that the smaller number of students per group meant increased time spent by the teacher on supporting and reassuring each student. This was particularly important in a situation such as that in Humanities where

'the money is not put into ancillary and other support help and basically it is only the classroom teacher... ..and to say that in a mixed ability class you are going to devote most of your time and attention to the slower learners is not acceptable for the majority of the other students.'

Reservations, however, had been expressed by the staff about the effects for the more able. It was considered that, while at the beginning of the year, those students, in what was labelled the 'express group,' seemed slightly reticent about voicing their opinions until they were used to being with other students of equal ability, by the summer term they were perceived as having become complacent. Mr. Stuart expressed the opinion that another disadvantage was that those in the express group were less likely to ask for

help because of the negative impression which might be conveyed to peers of not understanding or not being sufficiently knowledgeable. Wenger (1998) argues that relations in a community of practice are not necessarily always harmonious and there will be examples of disagreement, challenges and competition, which should nevertheless be seen as forms of participation. It is difficult to decide, however, whether the influence of some of the students in the express group and the power which they appropriated, actually constrained the participation of other students, or whether the teachers' expectations and explicit or implicit commendation of independent learning and understanding as indications of ability deterred students, who took longer to understand, from participating. Mr. Dale believed that while staff generally considered that the more able students '*got through a lot more work*' this was only one facet of the situation. It was, he considered, a serious problem that the students realised that '*they have got to be.....or they have got to do particularly badly.... or rather a real disaster to move out of the top set.*'

Modular timetable

The situation was compounded by the fact that due to the power exercised by Ofsted and its demands for more parity for Religious Education there had been staff and timetable reorganisation. It was reported by Mr. Dale that some of the Humanities staff considered this '*a complete nightmare and some would regard as shambolic*'. This reorganisation had involved adopting a modular approach so that each discipline would be studied in sequence for a fixed period of time, nine weeks, and in this way equal timetable weighting was secured. Once through the first cycle of modules the students would begin a module in the next discipline. A consequence of this approach to time tabling was that the possibility of moving a student from one ability grouping to another was almost impossible as the other group might be covering a totally different topic, or studying one that the student had already experienced. Mr. Stuart considered that,

although the modular organisation had the benefit of each teacher having access to all the students in Year 9, the duration of each module of nine weeks meant that the good working relationship which had been built up during that period could not be properly exploited. Additionally he believed that the organisation was confusing for the students as they did not have enough *‘information as to when they are going to meet the members of staff for the next module.’*

It was decided at the end of the summer term in 1999 that because of the perceived negative outcomes for the students in the ‘express groups’ there would no longer be setting by ability generally. All students, except those who had special educational needs, would be taught in mixed ability groups, while a ‘Foundation group’ was established for the next academic year for those students who were considered to need additional help. This amended organisation would be that experienced by the participants in the research when they moved into Year 9. The modular system however was to continue despite the staff’s reservations about this type of organisation.

4.2 Looking at practice in settings for children with special educational needs – teachers’ accounts

In this section I consider the classroom settings in the History department as experienced and orchestrated by Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart during the period of the research and their reflections on these which occurred during this time. The experiences of the teachers are considered at the intrapersonal level, but their accounts draw on the interpersonal experiences of the settings which they orchestrated and their interactions with students.

In discussing the findings I consider arena influences and locate the practice in the sociocultural perspective argued in Chapters 1 and 2 to provide an account that I later use to interpret the children’s experiences and my observations. The experiences of the teachers are considered chronologically and I set their experiences in the developments in the Humanities Faculty concerning different classroom groupings during this time.

4.2.1 First year of research – pilot study

Mr. Tudor

In the discussions in 1999 Mr. Tudor was very enthusiastic about his past experience of the grouping by ability organisation. He considered that the smaller group of 21 or 22 students was now in:

‘an environment in which they feel less threatened... ..than being surrounded by at least six or seven youngsters who are really spot on in the subject and are always giving the right answers.’

This situation, he believed, encouraged the students to feel able to volunteer answers which might not necessarily be right, but *‘the more positive feeling in the group’* meant that the fear *‘of being seen to be stupid’* which had existed in the mixed ability situation no longer existed. He also felt that the students were more likely to offer assistance to each other in negotiating meaning in the Foundation group, than they had in the mixed ability situation, thus extending peer scaffolding of learning.

‘One thing they do a lot is to redefine things that I say for one another. They put it into their own speak and explain things to one another.’

There had been negative comments from some of the students such as *‘we are only in the bottom set,’* at the beginning of the Autumn term and he recognised that there was a danger of categorisation, and this resonated with the concern expressed earlier by Mrs. King. However, Mr. Tudor said that by the end of term there had been a *‘tangible change in attitudes’* on the part of the students and they were referring to the set as being ‘Foundation’ rather than ‘bottom’ set. He also considered that the students’ work had improved and, with the freedom which he considered they now felt, they were making perceptive and insightful comments. He explained that as a teacher he believed that the smaller group meant that those students who were unsure of themselves and did not always respond were now not *‘hidden,’* and therefore he was able to help them more. He

was also very encouraged that some of the students had decided to opt for History as a GCSE subject.

The organisation of the physical space in a classroom is important for not only the students, but also the teacher. For the student it defines the people with whom they can interact and for the teacher it is part of her identity within the setting, controlling students and the pedagogy that will be employed (Nespor, 1997). Mr. Tudor's classroom had tables arranged in blocks of three or four so that six or eight students would be seated facing each other. This physical organisation made it clear that collaboration was expected and legitimised. The students were allowed to sit with friends and were not allocated any particular positions, unless the teacher felt that there was unsuitable behaviour or lack of concentration, in which case the student would be moved to what the teacher considered a more appropriate position.

Mr. Tudor explained that in all his classes he tried to employ a variety of activities to stimulate the students. In the Foundation group he had innovated practice to revisit and make more accessible certain skills associated with History which he considered the students in the other sets had already mastered, but those in the Foundation group had '*not got on board yet.*' In this way he recognised that students needed extended participation with the tools of the community to catch up with practice. The students' access to History had been made difficult because of their lack of engagement with what was considered to be the most important reificative tool of the subject, i.e. text. He said that both he and Mr. Stuart had worked hard to engage other practices and make sure that these students who had difficulties with literacy would not always have the perception that when they thought of History it was not always, '*History....oh right...books.*'

Mr. Stuart

In 1999 Mr. Stuart was also extremely supportive of the setted organisation and considered that there were definite benefits for the students in the Foundation group. He said that the students were more willing to share ideas than they had been in the mixed ability groupings in Year 8 and were also more willing to ask for help or to admit if they did not understand any issues. He suggested that the much lower teacher/student ratio had meant that each student had more time and attention from the teacher, and the pace of the lessons was different from that in the other classes, allowing the students to work at their own pace, resulting in their being *'more productive.'* There had been much more openness in discussions and Mr. Stuart said the students had developed

'a pride in their work because of the different organisation. I have noticed the children showing each other their work and saying, "look this is what I have done.'

One particular success had been the study of Native Americans. This had been undertaken to fulfil the requirements to study a non-European culture at Key Stage 3 (DfE, 1995). Mr. Stuart said that at the end of the module he was *'positively impressed'* by the way the students had demonstrated historical skills. He said that the students had found the module interesting but *'not very difficult'* and he interpreted that comment as their finding the subject matter *'quite fun at times, but not real school History.'* There was also the suggestion that History generally would not be perceived as being fun. The tables in Mr. Stuart's classroom were arranged in rows, and Mr. Stuart explained that,

'the children can sit with whoever they like and whoever they choose to work with unless I have good reason to believe that a pairing or a threesome may be disruptive.'

The arrangement in rows suggests that Mr. Stuart was either not aware of or did not value the role of collaboration in learning. Like Mr. Tudor, Mr. Stuart used a range of activities in all his classes, whether in classes of students who were considered to be of

average ability, or in express or Foundation groups. These activities included poster work, discussion, information technology and display work. He stated that he had tailored the lessons which he had employed with the other classes to open up practice and encourage greater participation for those students in the Foundation groups. It was clear from the interviews with Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart that there was great enthusiasm about the successes of the Foundation groups and the greater participation which the students enjoyed and an air of expectancy that these successes would continue

4.2.2 Second year of research – Main Study

In 2000 the teachers taught the students in the main study who were in Year 8 in mixed ability tutor groups, but were teaching Year 9 students in setted Foundation groups and mixed ability groups. I considered this experience would mediate their responses to their practice in Year 8 which directly impacted on the research. In the interviews, therefore, I first encouraged both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart to reflect on their practice and what they had learned from teaching the Year 9 groups before moving to their perceptions of the Year 8 groups in which the main study students were located. For each teacher I report on the Year 9 experiences followed by the Year 8 experiences.

Mr. Tudor – discussing Foundation grouping in Year 9

Mr. Tudor explained that in Year 9 in the Foundation groups there was a range of physical, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. He said that he continued to be excited and stimulated by the progress which the students were making in the Foundation groups and was encouraged that both the Foundation groups had been assigned two full time teaching assistants, a development which he considered had helped the students' progress considerably. He was also delighted to report that some of the students who had been in the Foundation group in the previous year had decided to opt for History as a GCSE and were '*really flourishing on the course.*' He continued to be

of the opinion that the benefits accrued from the Foundation group to those students who had special educational needs were *'enormous and that the organisation had brought into greater participation those children who had been on the periphery in Year 7 and 8 and who had not had any confidence.'*

Mr. Tudor considered that he had always been a teacher who reflected on his classroom practice and felt that he had learned a great deal from the experiences he had enjoyed with the Foundation groups. He said that he had analysed the successes of the Foundation groups and believed that he had capitalised on the relationships which had been established with the classes in Years 7 and 8 to subtly change the basis on which he interacted with the students and orchestrated the settings. He explained that the dynamics of the relationship had changed from his being a teacher to a co-learner in the learning process and the consequent advantages of this.

'I would like to be seen as a lead learner. I think basically the children feel that we are working towards something in common and I am as pleased as they are when we work like this. It is a common goal and the fact that we are working towards the same goal has brought an agenda of its own. Discipline, as an issue has disappeared. The thought that I may have to raise my voice has completely gone.'

In this exchange Mr. Tudor makes clear that he is aware that the shared endeavour is critical if students are to see their learning as purposeful. He also sees his relationship not as giver of information but as guide shifting the balance of responsibility for learning as something shared and, as Rogoff (1990) suggests, *'as children evidence increased skill in handling a process, their more expert partners can allow or even require them to take greater responsibility'* (p.104).

Mr. Tudor said that his reflections of the teaching that he had done with the Foundation group of the previous year had resulted in his structuring his lessons into what he

considered were more defined and manageable steps for the students enabling a greater accessibility to information. He said that this new structure which was taken '*very logically step by step is particularly relevant to children with sequencing difficulties and literacy problems.*' He said that the students appeared to like this new form which involved '*writing frames, lots of scaffolding and organisational support.*' Wenger (1998) argues that '*instruction does not cause learning; it creates a context in which learning takes place*' (p.266). By offering alternative forms of participation Mr. Tudor was opening up practice for the students, mediating the demands of the curriculum and creating a context in which learning could take place. At the beginning of each written assignment, which could last up to three weeks of lessons and homework, the students were given a set of bullet points which Mr. Tudor wanted them to include. In order to allow the students some control they were allowed to write each of the points in whatever order they wished. At the end of each lesson Mr. Tudor required each student to show him what progress they had made on that particular day's work. The presence of the teaching assistants had helped this process considerably.

Mr. Tudor also explained that for much of the lesson he would spend time sitting at each table with the students helping them with writing and discussion. Although he explained that he also did this sometimes with the mixed ability groups, he said that much of the teaching with those groups was more formal. He also expressed the opinion that it was possible because of fewer students in the Foundation group to lavish a great deal of care upon those students in the Foundation group. Although he thought that those students in the mixed ability groups might benefit from this sort of teaching he also believed that some at the '*upper end of the ability spectrum might find it patronising, while others might find it off putting.*'

The seating arrangements had remained the same as in the previous year. While he still allowed the students to sit with friends Mr. Tudor said that in the Foundation group he exploited what he saw as the *'positive dynamics of the situation,'* and would encourage the students by referring to successful interactions by saying, *'you two worked brilliantly on that last assignment and if you team up with that two over there it would be great.'* He said that while discussing this with me he had realised that there was a contrast between his attitude with the Foundation group and that with the mixed ability classes. While he still allowed students in those classes to sit wherever they wished, he tended to rearrange seating patterns in what he considered to be a punitive way such as *'well, you two don't work well together so you go and sit over there and you sit there.'*

Mr. Tudor – discussing mixed ability groupings – Year 8 (main study students' experience)

I discussed the mixed ability Year 8 groups, some of whose students would be the participants in the main research. Mr. Tudor said that there were about 30 students in the year who were classified as having special educational needs with one tutor group having a particularly wide range of abilities. It was this group which also had *'some very able students,'* where Mr. Tudor said that in the mixed ability situation he was concerned that he was not doing his *'best for everyone in the class.'* Mr. Tudor was conscious of the needs of the students across the range and the grouping made it difficult for him to practice in a way that met the needs of those at the top of the measured ability spread and those with literacy difficulties.

He explained that the key ideas of National Curriculum History in Year 8, such as the divine right of kings and Puritanism were particularly problematic for many students, but particularly those who experienced difficulties with literacy. He had spoken to several of the students with difficulties with literacy and they had expressed their liking for History, but felt frustration at *'not being able to get it down on paper.'* This situation was

exacerbated by decisions at the arena level which meant that funding practices did not allow for as much ancillary support in the Humanities Faculty for Year 8 as that available in Year 9. This practice mediated Mr. Tudor's practice with the result that he considered those students in Year 8 were '*really struggling*.' Despite this Mr. Tudor said that he wanted the students with difficulties with literacy '*to do some meaningful History*' without having it '*dumbed down*.' Mr. Tudor's account of his practice reflects his view that students with literacy difficulties are not deficit learners only capable of learning certain aspects of History, but need extended participation in order to engage with and negotiate meaning in the use of the tools of the subject.

Mr. Stuart – discussing Foundation grouping in Year 9

In the interview in 2000 Mr. Stuart was also still very enthusiastic about the Foundation group and the beneficial effects on self confidence he perceived this practice achieved for those students experiencing difficulties. He revealed that he thought that he had '*become more sensitive about children's feelings*' and that he considered that the students who experienced difficulties had a:

'low opinion of themselves. They come into lessons having prejudged their ability that they cannot do well in the subject and that if we have a test they will automatically get a low mark.'

It appeared that Mr. Stuart was locating the problem of perceived difficulty in the student and not in the policies and practices of assessment emanating at the level of the social order and brought into the arena of school, which make public that these students are not able, or expected, to achieve success or indeed study an academic subject like History. He also said that he suspected that some students could be '*quite cruel*' He based this perception on the fact that on the occasions that he asked the group whether anyone was going to opt for History as a GCSE subject he had gained the impression that some of the other students in the Foundation group had been dismissive of this idea.

‘One or two other students in the class may snigger at that as though they are thinking “why are they thinking about doing History when they wouldn’t be able to cope?”

Mr. Stuart’s confirmed that the seating arrangements had remained the same as the previous year and were still satisfactory. He said that he was pleased with the teaching strategies which he had used during the past year with the Foundation group and was working on those to refine and improve them. One of these was to try to link the History lessons with events within the students’ family History, a measure which had proved popular with the students.

‘I try to get them to think about History as being really important to themselves and their families by having an exercise in which I want them to find out the date of birth of their parents, grandparents and if possible their great grandparents. We spend a lesson in class researching a notable event from European or World History which happened in the year of the birth of their relatives.’

In the teachers’ accounts it was striking that Mr. Tudor talked of the pedagogic practices that he used such as scaffolding and structured support, the use of tools, such as writing frames to enable engagement with important tools of the subject. In these ways he tried and succeeded in enabling students’ participation and movement deeper into practice.

Mr. Stuart’s approach seemed to be about making the subject personally meaningful through connecting to their personal experiences. This is another important requirement of participation if children are to feel able and have the right to negotiate meaning and engage in the shared endeavour.

He revealed that the decision had been taken at department level, by both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart, to remove the module studying the Native Americans from the Year 9 curriculum. Mr. Stuart reiterated the view that he had articulated in the previous year

that although the students had enjoyed the topic they had not seen it as being '*real school History because it is not demanding enough.*' He was of the opinion that the module was easier than any of the other units and to make it more '*academically demanding,*' he had introduced some more source work, but this in itself posed a problem because there were insufficient resources for this topic.

It was clear that the teacher's representations were being mediated by policies from the wider social order, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the practices of the arena itself and its challenge to the status of Humanities subjects generally. The power of the academic curriculum, of what was seen 'to be History' and how it was being translated into practice was to impact significantly on the subject as it was experienced by students, particularly once again those whose access to it was already impeded. By the time I conducted this interview with Mr. Stuart I had already undertaken the pilot study and all of the students had expressed interest in the Native Americans topic and said that they had enjoyed studying it very much and were clearly able to engage with the topic and negotiate meanings within it

Mr. Stuart – discussing mixed ability groupings in Year 8

I discussed the groups in Year 8 and Mr. Stuart's perception of the participation of those students with learning difficulties and the responses to them from the other students. Mr. Stuart considered that those students with difficulties in Year 8 were participating satisfactorily in the mixed ability lessons '*in classroom discussion and little theatrical role play and the quizzes and games.*' This surprised me as in the first interview in 1999 about the experiment with grouping by ability he had intimated that he believed that the students had been less willing to participate in the mixed ability situation. He said that he was convinced that the students who experienced difficulties with literacy '*put as much effort into their work as any other child,*' but that in exercises which demanded

explanatory writing the work which they produced tended to be more '*descriptive and narrative*.' He did not, however, make any comments such as those by Mr. Tudor concerning the fact that the students '*were struggling*.' Mr. Tudor had voiced frustration about his not being able to apply the full repertoire of his practice as to meet different needs, but Mr. Stuart did not appear to experience this frustration or was unwilling to articulate it.

To confirm the response about students' participation I asked Mr. Stuart whether he thought that those students with difficulties were ever inhibited by the other students. He rejected this suggestion because he considered that:

'children in this school are quite supportive of those children and there is a good ethos in the school and the majority of the children will work co-operatively in the mixed ability groups this year.'

He also emphasised that his response to any inappropriate reactions was '*stern and immediate so they will learn very quickly to keep their poor opinions of the other person to themselves*.' It became clear therefore that his opinion of the more supportive atmosphere in the Year 8 classes and the greater participation applied specifically to the current year. He did, however, comment that he did:

'not think that the differences between the less able and the very able are as much a cause for potential embarrassment as they appear to be in Year 9. The differences do become apparent in Year 9, but in Year 8 they are still chummy.'

4.2.3 Third year of research – main study students in Year 9 Foundation group

By the time that these interviews took place the teachers had experienced the transition for the students in the main study from the mixed groupings of Year 8 to the Foundation groupings in Year 9. In the interviews in 2001 both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart revealed a marked dissatisfaction with some aspects of the setted organisation.

Mr. Tudor

Mr. Tudor was still very supportive of the principle of the Foundation group, but said that in this year there had been problems with one particular group which he had not encountered in the previous three years. He had employed the same teaching strategies, but conceded '*things are different for different children.*' He said that in this group which included the students in the main study, Eleanor and William, there were some particularly '*immature youngsters who are quite easily distracted and are really struggling at the moment.*' These particular students also had a high rate of absence. Mr. Tudor considered that the frequent absences led to several problems which affected not only the progress of those students, but also the group as a whole.

He said that the progress of the students who were often absent was unsatisfactory as their absences meant that they were unable to see the continuity of events or their causation and each lesson was a separate event. '*Each lesson, whether it is good or bad is an individual experience and each lesson stands alone.*' These students were not developing the skills, such as reflection, which were significant tools of the subject and without these their agency was constrained, and therefore, their participation. '*There is the way that they are problem solving, for example. It is very hard to get them to slow down and reflect. They just jump in and make a preliminary comment.*' Mr. Tudor was clearly concerned by the lack of engagement of this group of students and commented that he felt that he '*was not succeeding with them.*'

The absences of the students and their sporadic progress had led unfortunately, in Mr. Tudor's opinion, to the development of a number of "different communities" within that Foundation group. He distinguished between those students whom he considered to be willing learners and those who were not. The main community of which Eleanor was a participant was '*very positive and on task.*' He identified a definite sense of commitment

from this group whose skills in the subject had developed and they were now able to see *‘where a series of lessons is going and how it fits into the big picture and to make connections, parallels and links to the learning which has gone on before.’* He contrasted this with the other groups, one of whom included William, whom he felt he had not *‘managed to break into,’* in the sense of opening up practice sufficiently to increase their participation, and whose thinking was very *‘atomised and they only think in the context of that lesson.’*

He believed that the main community, while not necessarily seeing themselves as a *‘shared learning community, which would be going a bit far,’* would definitely view their group as being a set of supportive friends and peers who have an interest in a common activity. He did not consider that the other groups, some of whose members had *‘other factors coming in,’* would view themselves as being part of the History community. It would seem that these students, who did not participate in or identify with the shared endeavour, exercised their agency through rejecting the community and its purposes. One of the other factors was, in his opinion, that the students had already made their option choices for GCSE and, if they did not include a Humanities subject, viewed the Humanities curriculum as being of little importance.

The third effect of the absences of some of the students was that the numbers in the group often fell to below what was viable in a lesson where, for instance, discussion was an important element. Mr. Tudor said that, whereas the smaller number of 20 or 21 students had been a distinct advantage in previous years where there had been fewer absentees, in the present situation when there were 7 or 8 students absent it was difficult to *‘get a class dynamic going with only 12 or 13 children.’* The resources for collaboration, and therefore learning, were fewer, particularly as it was not always the same students that were absent. The unpredictable attendance rate of at least 30% of the

members of the class meant that the relationship to History and the engagement with it would have to be constantly renegotiated not only by those students on their return, but also by the remaining students against a continually changing backdrop of situational relationships.

At Faculty level these experiences appeared to have impacted on practice as in the mixed classes there were often 36 students in a group and the teachers in the Humanities Faculty were concerned that the large numbers impacted on the learning of those students and meant less time for individual attention. A joint decision had been reached, therefore, that in future years, the Foundation group would continue but would have up to 24 students allocated to the group. This meant that over the two groups there would be six more students with difficulties that could be supported and have access to ancillary help and the numbers in the main stream groups would be slightly fewer. It also meant that even if six students were away at any time in the Foundation group there would still be *‘a critical mass of at least sixteen students to a class dynamic of busy, buzzing groups in discussion.’*

Mr. Stuart

Mr. Stuart was of the opinion that, although the concept of the Foundation groups was still very worthwhile, the Foundation groups of the current year had been a disappointment and that resources had been wasted. He felt strongly that, although the numbers had been the same as in previous years, the students in those years had taken advantage of the opportunities of the smaller groups and the additional ancillary help available. He was concerned that there were:

‘quite a few kids in the Foundation groups who have made little or no effort to avail themselves of the luxury of a small group and are a pretty work shy this year and are

working at a lower standard and putting less effort into their work than they did in Year 7.'

He contrasted this situation with the one of the groups of the previous year who had *'different children who were purposeful and clearly made a great effort.'* There were, however, some students in the Foundation groups of the current year who had worked hard and produced good work.

Like Mr. Tudor, Mr. Stuart was also concerned that the composition of the groups when some students were absent meant that the enthusiasm of the remainder was affected badly. He was clearly irritated by the fact, as he saw it, that the resources of the department had been *'squandered'* on students who did not appear to value the organisation while other students were being in taught in classes which were so large that extra chairs had to be brought into the classroom. He was, therefore, very pleased that in the following year, although there would still be Foundation groups, the numbers of students in them would be greater. Mr. Stuart had also reorganised the seating arrangements in his classroom. The tables had been moved from being in rows to being set around three sides of the classroom with a row in the middle thus forming an 'E'. Students were now required to sit in alternate boy/girl formation to ensure better behaviour and attention.

Mr. Stuart said that, as last year, he tried to link the History lessons with the students' lives and would set information and learning in clearly staged step by step sequences. He explained that he made the teacher explanations *'a little bit simpler than with the mainstream groups and slowed down the pace considerably if necessary.'* He would, however, aim to reach the same level of questions that the mainstream groups achieved but at a much slower pace, trying to *'build up the children's confidence on the way.'* Mr. Stuart, like Mr. Tudor, had recognised the need for a change of pace in the lessons and

had attempted to alter his practice to enable engagement for those students experiencing difficulties with literacy.

4.3 Teachers' practice and their mediation

Certain points emerge from the discussions with Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart. Influences from the level of the social order impact on the arena of the school and thence to the arena of the Humanities Faculty. The requirements of National Curriculum History to study topics at Key Stage 3 such as 'The Making of the United Kingdom' with its very difficult concepts, made extra demands upon students who were already struggling with the discourse of the subject and found difficulty 'catching up with practice.' The possibility of additional help from teaching assistants for these students in Year 8 was diminished by the reduced funding to the Humanities Faculty from the arena of school. This reduced funding contributed to the decision to remove the module on Native Americans because there were insufficient resources to continue this topic which the students enjoyed so much. The decision was also taken because the module did not fulfil perceptions at the Humanities arena level of what constituted academic history.

It can be seen from Mr. Tudor's account of his practice that he acknowledged and valued highly the role of collaboration in learning and the importance of fostering an identity of belonging within the community of learners to encourage greater participation and alignment with the practice of 'doing History.' To this end in each lesson he had been at pains to mediate the students' learning experiences by moderating his practices considerably and attempting to foster a sense of agency for the students. By his practice Mr. Tudor supported Sfard's (1998) suggestion that;

'the participation metaphor seems to bring a message of everlasting hope. Today you act one way; tomorrow you may act differently'

(p.8)

Mr. Stuart's view of mind, however, seemed to resonate much more strongly with the symbol-processing model. He did not seem to perceive the benefits to be gained from collaborative learning. Although he had moderated his practices it appeared that this had been done with a much greater emphasis on independent learning, so much so that he had organised his classroom in such a way to deter collaborative learning other than by limited dyadic interaction.

It also appeared that despite Mr. Tudor asserting that '*things are different for different children,*' there had been an implicit assumption from both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart that the success not only of the relationships with students, but also the of the hard work which they had undertaken to tailor their practices to make the subject accessible and which had been enjoyed in previous years, would be repeated in 2001. There was also a marked contrast between the reactions of Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart to the disappointment which they experienced that the successes of the previous years had not been forthcoming, thus illustrating their different personal philosophies towards teaching,

Mr. Tudor clearly attributed the shortcomings of the situation to his pedagogy, explaining that he was '*not succeeding*' with the students. He did not, however, seem to understand how far his desire to work in a way which would engage students was mediated by influences from the level of the social order and also perhaps by factors within the organisational practices of the arena of school and of his settings within it. His focus was that he should have been able to teach effectively and he had failed. Mr. Stuart, on the other hand, appeared to subscribe to a view that failure was due to a deficit within the students and considered that the seeds of the perceived failure could be attributed to the students' attitudes and their being more '*work shy*' and not working to the standard which was expected of them, not only by him, but by the arena of the school and the social order outside.

CHAPTER 5

‘I am often struggling’ - The story of Henry

Henry enjoyed a close-knit family life. He lived with both parents and his older sister in a very small village about two miles from Cullishaven School. Although his grandparents did not live with Henry in the same house they lived nearby and he saw them often. Henry was on Stage 1 of the school’s Special Educational Needs register and was described on this as ‘having difficulties with spelling.’ In his Key Stage Two Standardised Assessment Tests he had scored Level 3 in English and in his Cognitive Ability Test in Year 7 he had registered below 70% for Verbal Reasoning and 84% for Non-Verbal Reasoning giving him an overall score of 77%. The Cognitive Ability Tests records scores of 85-115 as being average and thus Henry’s score placed him as ‘below average’ and as having ‘moderate learning difficulties.’ The Verbal Reasoning score also indicated that he would have difficulty dealing with textual materials.

When I first met Henry in the spring term of Year 8 he was being taught by Mr. Tudor in a mixed ability tutor group. He was polite, eager to participate in the research and responsive in the interviews. He was of average height and build for a boy in Year 8, but when he considered which stone could be chosen to represent him he chose one of the larger ones, because he considered that *‘it looks quite heavy and I’m quite heavy myself.’* In the written pre-interview questionnaire to elicit information about participation in activities outside classroom lessons and learning made available from those, Henry stated that he did not join in any of the organised lunchtimes activities at school, but *‘just played football with friends.’* As a hobby he also played football with his friends after school in the local park or on the street.

He explained that he watched television for about four hours each day, which he considered *‘not much time.’* His television viewing comprised programmes such as soap

operas and films that he '*was old enough to watch*'. He also watched videos or films at the cinema which were comedies. Because he said he found books '*really hard to read*,' his choice was narrowed and he preferred books which were based on television programmes such as 'Goosebumps.' The History made available to Henry outside school was restricted. He said that he did not watch any television programmes which were concerned with History unless, as he explained, '*there were the odd times that my dad happens to be watching something about it on Sky*'. Neither did he read any books about History. He said that this was partly because he found them too hard to read and also because the subject matter was not really of interest to him.

It became clear as the interview progressed that the arena of school generally and the requirement by the specified curriculum of students to competently engage with and make use of written text were placing demands on Henry which he found difficult to fulfil. Henry's positionality as a student who experienced difficulties with literacy and the label to this effect which he had acquired within the world of school had become an identity which affected his school life, his perceptions of himself and his abilities so strongly that even his interpretation of what was required of him as a student in the arena of Cullishaven School, that of '*just producing some good work*' became progressively more difficult to attain. He said that his problem had been noticed first in Year 7 by a teaching assistant when '*he was misreading things on work and writing down the answers wrong and all*' and he considered that he was dyslexic. The logistics of this situation were a little confused as it is unlikely that Henry would have had access to a teaching assistant if any difficulties had not already been recognized by the school. References to dyslexia were not registered on the school's Special Educational Needs register and additional help was not always available for him.

Henry explained that he found lessons such as English and Humanities in which there was *'a lot of reading... very difficult.'* While he tried to cope with writing it was still a problem as he said, *'every now and then I get the feeling that I can't really spell all these words.'* Settings, where the demands of the subject to engage in literacy practices in order to participate, undermined Henry's agency. These practices, which were open to those 'people like us' who were readers, were closed to him, and the process of reification and engaging with the discourse of the community were not available to him to extend his agency. He relied heavily on his friends, some of whom also experienced difficulties, to explain tasks and to support any participation that he attempted. However, if he were faced with a situation in which there were fewer people with whom he was friendly, he acknowledged a sense of isolation, uncertainty and marginalization.

'In the groups where you don't really know a lot of people, you're like on your own and teachers say to work with people and like who can I work with, cos I don't really know no-one.'

Henry stated that he did not really have a favourite subject, but he supposed that it might be Information Technology, yet even here he admitted that he had only a partial grasp of what was required of him. *'Sometimes I...like understand what to do and sometimes I'm not really too sure... ..I'm not very good on computers, 'cos I don't know what buttons to use.'* Deeper participation in this subject and therefore an increased ability to negotiate meanings in the domain was further denied as he did not have a computer at home. Henry considered that this also made it difficult for him to complete some homework unless he stayed at school and worked on the school computers.

Henry's identity as a family member was strong and he enjoyed a close relationship with his parents and could have expected to have been able to ask for support from them for schoolwork. However he explained that from necessity they both worked long hours and

he was often alone for some time in the evenings. Homework therefore presented a problem generally for him, mainly because he was concerned that there would not be anyone to help him and once again he would be faced with uncertainty about *'knowing what to do.'* He preferred to try to do the homework at school because:

'you know there's people all around where you can ask them to help you when you need it. When you're at home you've got like everyone out and you're in on your own trying to do the homework.'

This further restricted the opportunities he had to participate and to develop competency in the subject. Holland et al. (1998) describe the way that agency, identification and expertise in a subject develop together and if a learner's agency is constrained then both their competency and their identification with the subject is compromised.

The smallish stone that Henry chose to represent History was multi-coloured, but predominantly with a reddish-brown hue. This was chosen because it reminded him of the *'floors that you used to have.'* Henry displayed a positive liking for the subject and placed the stone representing History in the second circle only slightly behind that for Information Technology, his most preferred subject in the curriculum. When asked how much he felt he understood the subject he explained that he thought he probably understood it more than he liked it and moved the stone slightly closer to the centre yet still in the second circle (see figure 3.2, p.106). There appeared to be a mismatch between Henry's averred liking for the subject and his understanding which may well be attributed to the difficulties which he experienced in demonstrating the understanding which he believed he had, thus affecting his identification with the subject.

All students were asked to consider what the teacher's perception of their understanding might be and to place a stone accordingly. In Year 8 Henry was taught History by Mr. Tudor in the tutor group which was a mixed ability class. Mr. Tudor was at pains to

modify his practice, particularly for students who experienced difficulties, by offering help and different forms of engagement in order to open up practice and extend the students' participation. Henry acknowledged this and enjoyed being taught by Mr. Tudor whom he liked because he knew that Henry *'had problems with reading and writing and he always helps me and is really nice.'* Henry considered that Mr. Tudor believed that he did not *'understand most of it... ..because most of the time I ask him to help me and he helps me,'* and placed the stone to represent Mr. Tudor's view of his understanding in the third circle. It appeared from Henry's comment that he based his notion of what Mr. Tudor viewed as his understanding on the amount of help he received from the teacher and not on his verbal or written responses to tasks. Geography and Religious Education were also subjects in which he believed the teachers considered his understanding of the subject was lower than he believed it to be. Once again Henry attributed this to his difficulties with literacy which meant that when doing homework for these subjects he *'didn't really get a lot put down'* and *'didn't really know what to write.'* He believed that one solution might be to *'download stuff from the Internet'* but because there was no computer at home his access to this resource was limited to the time that he was at school.

Henry saw participation as being active and *'putting up my hand and asking and answering questions.'* He placed the stone on the border of the third and fourth circles to represent his participation in a class lesson in History.

'I don't really ask a lot of questions... ..I join in now and then, but sometimes questions come up that are too tricky and I don't.... know....If I put my hand up...I just know that I'll end up saying the wrong answer because I don't really know it and it's just like a guess.... In a class lesson.... ..if the teachers just come to you and you're not expecting it...you don't know what to say.'

Peer and Reid (2002) suggest that:

‘a condition of learned helplessness can be evident in many dyslexic students by the time they reach secondary school. A student with unacknowledged or badly handled specific learning difficulties will not be successful, and the most vulnerable period is often within the adolescent age group – the secondary school sector’ (p.242).

While Henry had not been diagnosed as dyslexic I argue that he had acquired ‘learned helplessness.’ His difficulties with literacy and the identity of incompetence had become a mantle which enveloped him, its influence permeating each encounter he had or indeed envisaged with tasks which represented engagement with anything remotely academic whether or not these tasks involved reading and writing. It was clear from his responses that he experienced very little agency in class lessons, but was agentive in choosing consciously not to participate in any public way and thereby protect himself because of the probability, in his eyes, that he would either do or say something wrong.

He saw his participation in group discussions as being higher and placed the stone at the outer edge of the second circle. He considered that when he worked in a group situation he knew *‘quite a bit of stuff,’* and it appeared that he felt much safer and not so isolated with the support of others around him.

‘If you’re in a groupif they ask you a difficult question there’s at least four or five people in your group that... ..one of them could like know the answer and just say it and then you’re all right....you’re not getting the answers wrong and all.’

Mr. Tudor organised his classroom to encourage dialogue between students and allowed them to choose who they worked with in Year 8. Henry voiced the opinion, however, that generally in school he preferred to work on his own if the task involved writing. It was, he explained *‘not so bad with one other person...but not if you’re not allowed to choose who you want to work with.’* However he explained that if he worked with his friends where he felt his greatest support lay he was *‘always getting into trouble and not getting enough work done.’*

Although he found *'reading and writing very difficult'* particularly in English lessons the homework for this subject did not present such a difficult problem for him as one of the teaching assistants would give him *'a little sheet of paper if I'm really stuck and then I can copy it into my book.'* His responses revealed that for much of the time the arena of school and the settings within it formed a forum in which his uncertainties and anxieties could be rehearsed, often privately through an inner dialogue which reinforced earlier experiences and thus his identity of incompetence.

The lesson which I videoed and observed in the summer term of Year 8 was based on the National Curriculum module of The Expansion of Trade and Industry 1750-1900. The atmosphere in the classroom was informal yet businesslike and it was apparent by the way in which the students entered the classroom that they expected to work when they came to a History lesson with this teacher. The classroom was organised so that students could sit around tables in groups of six with friends, an arrangement which Mr. Tudor considered fostered collaboration and facilitated participation. Henry sat at a table with five of his friends and appeared to be very relaxed and organised his books immediately he sat down.

Mr. Tudor's demeanour and classroom practice confirmed Henry's perception of this teacher as being *'very friendly with the students.'* As the students entered he had welcomed them, saying, *'Good morning, guys, how are you?'* He maintained an easy discipline with them and, by his very positive acknowledgement of their responses and attempts to make the language and discourse of the subject accessible to all the students, was at pains to legitimize each pupil's membership of the community of learners. He was obviously popular and the students responded readily to any jokes that he made. The title for this lesson which Mr. Tudor wrote on the board was *'to examine the ways in which Great Britain was transformed into a modern industrial nation between 1750 and*

1900.’ Mr. Tudor’s practice in this lesson confirmed his earlier assertion that he structured the lesson to enable participation for all students and divided this lesson into different sections so that the students were never required to work for longer than fifteen minutes on any activity. He asked them to write down the focus sentence from the board, asking them if anyone could explain what the word ‘transform’ meant. While the word ‘transform’ is not necessarily a reification which is restricted to the subject of History, Mr. Tudor was at pains to open practice to the students and introduce them to terminology which was used in the subject. Several students raised their hands, Henry being among them, but he was not asked to give an answer.

There was a brief class discussion about how a transformation of a town might be effected and then a short clip of approximately 10 minutes of a video was shown highlighting the development of Manchester between 1750 and 1850. During this time Henry was completely attentive, both in the discussion and the showing of the video. After the video Mr. Tudor asked the students to look at two pictures in a text book which contrasted Manchester in 1750 and 1850. They were then asked to discuss with their partner or the other students at the table the differences that they could identify and to draw a table in which they listed words and phrases which described the two pictures. Mr. Tudor drew a diagram on the board with an exemplar of what was required. Although the other five boys on the table initially discussed the task together and then worked alone, Henry did not participate in a discussion with his partner but immediately started to draw the table in his book and, as he had explained in his interview, appeared to prefer to work alone throughout this writing task. Occasionally his partner looked at Henry’s work, but there was no conversation between them.

At the end of the task Mr. Tudor explained that he would ask each table for some suggestions as to the differences in the pictures, and asked the group on Henry’s table to

give words to describe Manchester in 1750. Five of the boys including Henry's partner put up their hands, but Henry did not. Each offered an answer and then Mr. Tudor facilitated participation for Henry by altering the task slightly, asking him what he could see in the picture of 1750 that could not be seen in that of 1850 and Henry answered '*blue skies.*' It would appear that from Henry's response that he had taken the question at face value rather than interpreting it in any historical form or extending it to comment that the blue skies denoted a lack of pollution. This suggests that he was unable to distinguish which factors were salient from an historical perspective. Mr. Tudor acknowledged his answer positively by saying, '*yes, Henry, well done.*' Mr. Tudor wrote all their answers on the board and then praised the group by saying, '*well done, give yourself a round of applause.*' It is interesting to note the tension which was apparent here, i.e. Mr. Tudor's appreciation of Henry's vulnerability and therefore his efforts to value Henry's contribution and create a sense of belonging for him at the expense of Henry 'doing real History' and being able to identify historically salient features.

Mr. Tudor then asked whether anyone in the class could think of a word which started with 'r' which described Manchester at that time and one student replied 'rural.' Mr. Tudor turned to a group of girls and asked them to give words which described Manchester in 1850 and commented, '*your group will have to do well because the boys did so well.*' At this point Henry and his group started talking and confirmed the assertion that Henry had made in his interview that when he worked with his friends he was always '*getting into trouble.*' Mr. Tudor quickly reprimanded them by saying '*the girls listened with the utmost courtesy to your contribution. Please return the favour.*' The boys responded immediately and remained quiet while the other group offered their views.

The final task of the lesson was to consider 10 primary source pictures - depicting Britain between 1750 and 1900. The students were required to draw a time line with 1750 at one end and 1900 at the other and place each picture on it according to which end they considered most appropriate, either pre or post industrialisation. So, for example, a picture of a woman at a spinning wheel would clearly be placed closer to 1750. Once again Mr. Tudor drew an example on the board. Henry appeared to listen attentively to the explanation of the task and an example.

Mr. Tudor, encouraging collaboration between the students, emphasised that he wished them to discuss the pictures in their groups before attempting the writing task and four of the boys in Henry's group collaborated, yet once again neither Henry nor his partner engaged in any discussion. Henry started to work on his own but stopped writing after a short time and seemed unsure as to how to proceed. Contrary to his assertion in his interview that he asked his friends for clarification about tasks, he did not refer to anyone else at the table in this instance. It appeared that, as with the previous task, Henry was aware of the task but unclear as to what was really required, in this case what was historically significant in the pictures. Henry did not appear to have access to the joint enterprises of the History community, nor was he able to negotiate meaning within the subject culture, thereby giving him a confused understanding of what was entailed in 'doing History.' Mr. Tudor's attempts to give constructive feedback and reassure Henry may well have reinforced an inappropriate view that using an everyday framework to interpret historical material was correct. For a learner like Henry appropriate ways of using the discourse of the subject and taking multiple perspectives (Greeno, 1998) are difficult to access and this difficulty marginalises him and undermines his agency. His partner did not join in with the rest of the group and put up his hand to ask a question of the teacher. Mr. Tudor moved over to the group and, once he was there and had

answered the boy's question, Henry engaged him in a lengthy discussion. He was then able to continue with the work, but still alone.

At the end of the activity Mr. Tudor asked the students to give their answers with the explanation. Henry did not volunteer any answers. Mr. Tudor then picked the picture of a woman at the spinning wheel and asked whether anyone could find the picture which was the contrast to this. Several students including two on Henry's table identified a textile factory. Henry did not offer an answer, but once again Mr. Tudor opened up the practice for Henry and engaged him by rephrasing the question as to what he thought was different in the second picture and Henry answered that it was a factory. The bell rang for the end of the lesson and several students, including Henry, set about putting away their books. Mr. Tudor told them to sit still and rounded off the lesson.

If participation in whole class activities is viewed as being that classified by Henry of *'putting up my hand and answering questions,'* then his participation could be assessed from the evidence witnessed as being marginal. However, if adopting the Lave and Wenger notion of participation and interpreting Henry's behaviour in working alone as being legitimate peripheral participation, it is possible to reassess the situation. However, he struggled with engaging in practice in small group work, as evidenced in this lesson and his participation appeared to be at the same level as that in whole class activity and therefore contradicted his perception of greater involvement in group work. That does not mean to say that a more active form did not occur in other History lessons, in Year 8 or indeed in other subjects where practical work features more prominently. His behaviour suggests that he had not understood what 'doing History' entailed and practice had not opened up very much for him in this lesson.

The second interview of Year 8 with Henry took place on the day after the above lesson was observed. Henry explained that he *'had got stuck'* on the reading and writing which was undertaken in the lesson of the previous day. I asked him to read a secondary source extract written in 1986 about the development of Manchester, which he did very slowly with no regard to punctuation and was only able to articulate words such as *'employed'* after considerable effort. He wrongly identified the text as being primary source material because, *'it was written in the 1700s then it was a while before most people was born in these days now.'* This response indicated, once again, that Henry had not accessed this reification and had used an everyday framework to interpret the material.

I then moved on to some of the terms used in the lesson such *'rural'* *'transformed'* and *'industry'*. Henry remembered clearly that Manchester in 1750 had been *'near enough all greeny... ..there was quite a lot of trees... .. It was not very packed and there was a river going down it.'* He was not able to remember the word *'rural'*, and after I suggested it to him, he responded that he did not remember the word but knew that Mr. Tudor had *'said something about rural.'* Henry was able to describe the development which had taken place by 1850 and explained that, *'it's all run by machinery with smoke and all... ..um... it is quite packed... ..it has a lot of houses... ..it's really smoky compared to 1750.'* I asked if he could remember the word used by Mr. Tudor to describe the complete change which had occurred in Manchester and with a little prompting from me said *'transform.'* He was also able to articulate that Manchester had indeed been transformed between 1750 and 1850 as the results were evident in that, *'in 1750 it is all greeny and in 1850 it is just grey and it is all really smoky, but in 1750 clean skies, no smoke or nothing.'*

Despite some leading questions and considerable scaffolding from me Henry did not, however have any real grasp of the explanation of the events that had caused Manchester

to change from a rural community into a heavily industrialised centre. I turned the discussion to a comparison of Manchester in 1850 and the area in which Henry lived – a very rural village, and asked him whether he thought that his village might have changed to become like Manchester. He responded, *'No, it is not all that smoky. It is just nice and clear skies...I don't know why it didn't change. I haven't lived down here all my life.'* I then asked him whether the nearest town had changed in the same way and he answered that it had not. When asked why he thought that might be he replied that *'maybe the council haven't thought about changing things there.'* Cooper and Dunne (1999) citing work of Bernstein (1996) and Bourdieu (1990) suggest that working class students who lack specific subject competence may draw on their everyday knowledge and structures to make incorrect inferences and responses to test questions. It was apparent that Henry was not only doing this, but also that he did not understand the nature and causes of historical change. It seemed that Henry had two difficulties with which to contend, that of accessing and understanding the task required, but then trying to draw on such a limited conceptual understanding of History that his observations would continue to be inappropriate.

Mr. Tudor considered that Henry did not have an *intrinsic interest* in the subject of History and placed the stone representing Henry's liking for the subject in the third circle, but reflected that the key to his participation in lessons in Year 8, was the subject matter of each lesson and the relationship which he had established with him. He believed that *'although Henry might be seen initially as typifying the slightly disaffected lad any good teacher could turn around his participation.'*

Mr. Tudor suggested that the three factors which adversely affected Henry's negotiation of meaning with material in the History curriculum were a short attention span, the problems that he experienced with literacy and as a result of the latter the inability to appreciate the subtleties often inherent in written evidence and saw Henry as *'a real*

concrete lad.' What he believed was Henry's short attention span also led to a difficulty in retaining information from one lesson to another and therefore being unable to discuss and understand concepts such as causation in historical events. This confirmed my perception of Henry as experiencing difficulties when asked in the interview about the lesson to hypothesise about the reasons for the industrialization of Manchester.

Mr. Tudor explained that Henry had laboured when reflecting about issues in the earlier module, that of 'The Making of the United Kingdom,' and had *'struggled with concepts such as the bias inherent in reporting the different perspectives of Protestants and Catholics in the Reformation.'* He considered that the nature of History with its *'dependence to a fairly high degree on a written outcome'* meant that even with *'the best teachers'* Henry would experience difficulty in enjoying success in the more academic aspects of the subject.

It is possible that Henry's lack of 'intrinsic interest' in History could be attributed to his inability to engage in the oral discourse of the subject and negotiate meanings within it. Wenger (1998) argues that words as reifications of practice *'can take advantage of shared participation among interlocutors to create shortcuts to communication'* (p.62). This, of course, hinges on the assumption that there is not only shared participation among interlocutors, but also shared understanding of the meanings. For Henry his lack of understanding of the oral reifications of History, and therefore his inability to participate fully with others in the joint enterprise of 'doing History,' was compounded by his difficulties with literacy which precluded him from independent work to reduce the hiatus between him and the 'people like us' who are able to participate. Thus his identity of incompetence was emphasised for him and accompanied him to each successive History setting. Once again Mr. Tudor looked only within the setting for explanations of students' failure to learn. Although he acknowledges differences within

children he assumes that these differences and any difficulties arising from these can be catered for through his practice.

Mr. Tudor suggested that Henry enjoyed a greater active participation and engagement when tasks were more active and that, as a teacher, he attempted to facilitate this participation for all those students who experienced difficulties by providing alternative strategies which were not totally dependent on fluency with literacy within the overall tasks set for the whole class. Mr. Tudor, however, did not clarify whether he viewed Henry's greater participation as resulting in greater understanding. He was also aware of Henry's disappointment at his lack of success when trying to record the results of the tasks.

While Mr. Tudor viewed Henry as being more actively involved when the tasks did not necessarily demand literacy he considered that Henry's attention was more likely to remain '*focused*' in a class lesson where the teaching approach was more didactic and that his participation in this type of lesson reflected this and placed the stone representing Henry's participation on the borders of the fourth and fifth circles. This contrasted with Henry's belief that his participation was higher and placing the stone representing his participation in class lessons as being on the borders of circles 3 and 4. Mr. Tudor assessed Henry's group participation as being in the fifth circle. This was because he considered that Henry,

'may be good for the first half minute and then something will distract him and he is struggling to stay with it. Sometimes he goes off task quickly because his attention span is limited.'

He also suggested that Henry's participation in the lesson which I observed and videoed was '*quite good*' but was in fact atypical of him generally. Mr. Tudor's perception of

Henry's participation in group work as being '*quite good*' in the lesson which I observed suggested that his view, quite naturally, was based on perceptions of Henry's behaviour in the past and an interpretation of participation as being time spent on tasks rather than discussion or possibly disrupting other students. It also revealed a clear disjunction between Mr. Tudor's view and that of Henry who had viewed his participation in group work in lessons as being much higher and had placed the stone in the second circle.

The first interview in Year 9 with Henry took place in the spring term when he was being taught by Mr. Stuart. He had experienced the Foundation group since the autumn term of the previous year when he had been taught by Mr. Tudor. Henry was once again enthusiastic about participating in the research and willing to give comprehensive answers to my questions. His initial responses led me to believe that his disposition of being a student who experienced extensive marginalization in many settings was changing and the interview started on a positive and optimistic note. This was reflected in the changes in his choice of stone. The stone which he chose to represent himself was one which he considered to be '*colourful and small.*' He said that he had chosen this because he sometimes liked to wear colourful clothes. He explained that he was now participating more in PE and a wider variety of games, including swimming and running both at school and with the same friends as in Year 8 outside school.

His only reading outside school was a television magazine and occasionally the Sun and Mirror newspapers. He hardly ever used his school library ticket and although he had a ticket for the public library he used this only sometimes, but not regularly, because as he commented, '*I am not very good at reading.*' His television viewing habits had remained the same as those in Year 8, soap operas such as Eastenders and Emmerdale and occasionally quiz shows. His access to History was still confined to that to which he was exposed at school and that outside school had remained negligible. He stated that

he only watched *'a bit of anything to do with History if my Dad's watching it'* but did not watch those programmes from choice as he explained, *'I don't find them interesting at all.'* Those television programmes or videos concerned with History which he had watched had been watched in lessons at school.

His parents' working hours had changed and as a result there was a greater engagement by them with Henry's schoolwork. Henry was reassured and encouraged by their greater availability and he said that he now felt happier about working at home.

'Cos' last year Mum and Dad was working all the time, so like I couldn't get help off them, but this year they're not working all through now so they're home about six o'clock. So if I do my homework when they get in then they help me.'

If his parents were unable to help him then he said he could ask his grandparents or his sister who was *'very clever.'*

As the interview progressed however, Henry's responses indicated that his disposition of being a student who was fearful about much in the arena of school had strengthened, particularly about the possibilities for failure which each of the settings in school presented. McDermot (1999) argues that failure is present in every classroom. Because *'everyone cannot do better than everyone else, failure is an absence real as presence and it acquires its share of the children'* (p.18). The identity of a *'struggling learner'* which Henry had appropriated indicated that he had succumbed, through no fault of his own to the spectre of failure.

He acknowledged reluctantly that his reading had improved *'sometimes'* in the period since the last interview, and attributed this to having had help from some Year 11 students in a peer tutoring project, but insisted vehemently that he still found reading *'kind of the same, quite difficult sometimes, and there are still some words I can't read.'*

He also expressed concern about the difficulties he continued to experience with writing and spelling. *'I struggle with writing and I'm not very good at spelling either.'* These problems were magnified for him if he were faced with the situation of not having access to a computer from which he could download material and read it at a slower pace, but had to extract information from text books in lessons. *'We have to write it out and I find it hard to read it.'* As in Year 8 there was still no computer available for him at home. Henry's access to History and its concepts was continually limited by his battle with the written word not only because he found it difficult to read material from books but, by extension, from the board and once having taken time to decipher the text having to transfer it to his exercise book.

There was little escape from the problems that he experienced with literacy and these were carried from setting to setting. He was keenly aware that he still needed help much of the time from teachers and he revealed that he found it *'difficult to keep up'* and said *'I'm often struggling... Sometimes I forget what the teachers say. I've got to ask them again and again.'* He remained unsure about how to do some tasks and said that he continued to rely on his friends for clarification and reassurance. *'If I don't understand something then, with other people getting on with it I could ask them and then they'll help me and tell me what to do and stuff like that.'* Clearly Henry depended on his friends to help him locate the material of the lesson in a wider framework, but was unable to do this for himself and therefore could not establish an overall sense of the purposes of History, not only for each lesson but overall.

Working in the library presented a particular hurdle for Henry especially if he were working alone. He found understanding some of the texts very difficult and resorted to a basic phonics approach which was not always successful. *'I'll just try to break it up and if I still don't get it then I'll just leave it and just go on to the next book.'* Wenger (1998)

argues that reification and participation *'can be woven so tightly that the distinction between them seems almost blurred'* (p.62). However,

'if reification prevails – if everything is reified, but with little opportunity for shared experience and interactive negotiation – then there may not be enough overlap in participation to recover a coordinated, relevant or generative meaning' (p.65).

For Henry each text was a reification with which he struggled often unsuccessfully and therefore he could not construct meaning from it. Attempting to engage with this alone without opportunities for greater participation and shared meanings is yet another way in which Henry's agency was restricted. Henry's need of support from his peers in a group situation to enable him to negotiate meaning and therefore to experience agency continued to be counterbalanced as in Year 8 by a feeling that where a task required writing he concentrated more if he worked alone. He explained that often *'if you're doing it on your own you take more interest in what the teacher's saying than you do when you're in a group cos' when you're in a group you're just talking to people.'*

The organisation of setting which Henry experienced in Mr. Stuart's classroom was very different from that which he had enjoyed in Mr. Tudor's classroom in Year 8 and strongly affected Henry's attitude towards the subject. Mr. Stuart maintained strict control of the physical space of the classroom with the organisation being more formal than that of Mr. Tudor's and the students not being allowed to sit with friends, but being assigned to sit in boy/girl formation at desks which were placed in a large E shape across the room. As Mr. Stuart had explained, this organisation had been to ensure better behaviour from the students. Henry explained that, *'he didn't let us have a chance of like sitting with who we want, he just sorted us out.'* Henry's participation in History lessons in Year 8 had depended strongly on being legitimated by his friends and the sympathetic attitude of the teacher. He said that initially he had found the different classroom organisation very difficult. He had enjoyed working with his friend John who

was now sitting separately from him. However Henry had been placed next to Mathilda, another student in the research, and he said that now he found this arrangement 'O.K.'

The liking for History which Henry had professed in Year 8 had diminished in Year 9 and it appeared that he often considered the subject an obstacle to be overcome. The stone which he chose to represent History in Year 9 was the largest of the group, in contrast to the smaller stone which he had chosen in Year 8 and he explained that he had chosen this because '*it was good to get the biggest thing out of the way first,*' indicating the problematic situation he now faced in the subject. Henry projected a more negative view of his attitude towards History than had been the case in Year 8 and placed the stone representing his liking for the subject at the outer edges of the fourth circle, because the subject was not so '*exciting*' in Year 9. In Year 8 Mr. Tudor had been at pains to extend students' engagement with the subject by using other forms of representation to communicate ideas that are historically legitimate but more accessible to students like Henry who struggled with writing. Some of these Henry had enjoyed such as '*things like drawing cartoons.*' The facility to use drawing as an alternative to writing had opened up practice and allowed Henry to enter deeper into it and experience himself as competent. He explained that he could '*express things better by drawing than trying to put it into words.*' In Year 9 however the possibilities for developing a sense of competence for Henry were reduced, because there was '*much more writing*' and a focus on this form of representation resulting in his '*falling behind with the writing*' and reinforcing his identity of a marginalized member of the class community.

When asked how he viewed his understanding of the subject he placed the stone on the borderline of the second and third circles reflecting a lower sense of his competence compared with Year 8 but again a marked difference between his liking for the subject and his belief in his understanding of it. As he explained, he felt that although he did not

like the subject as much as in Year 8 he understood it most of the time, but believed that Mr. Stuart thought that his understanding was much lower. He indicated his view of Mr. Stuart's perception of his understanding by placing the stone on the borderline of the fourth and fifth circles and suggested that this was so because of the difficulty he experienced in *'keeping up with the work.'* He also believed that while Mr. Tudor had understood his problems with reading and writing in Year 8, Mr. Stuart *'didn't really know'* about him.

Despite the fact that Henry said that he did not like History as much in Year 9 he was enthusiastic about the Foundation set (setted ability grouping) and experienced a strong identity of belonging within the group. It was clear that his liking for the organisation was affected very strongly by the fact that in the settings orchestrated by Mr. Stuart the low numbers of students meant that teacher-student interactions were increased. This put more emphasis on participation allowing students like Henry more opportunities to negotiate meanings. As he explained:

'Being in the bottom group is a good thing at the moment because when I don't understand things the teacher can explain it to me. There's not so many of us this year and if he finds out that there's a problem with us then he can help us and then we can get better at doing it.'

Henry referred again to what he clearly saw as an advantage in this type of organisation when we discussed his opinion of the Mathematics organisation, a strictly setted subject. Despite the fact that he saw the students in his Mathematics set as being *'set for all the lowest'* he was extremely enthusiastic about the arrangement. This was because there were two teachers working with the group comprising fewer students than in mixed ability groupings and therefore more help was available for each individual student who might be *'struggling.'* Henry appeared to be aware of potential problems in the

classroom as he explained that the teacher has *'got to keep them in line and if there are people over there who need help it's hard, but with two teachers, one will help on that side and one will help on this side.'*

Henry's perception of the classroom organisation was tightly intertwined with the nature of each subject. He commented on the organisation of the Mathematics classroom and immediately went on to contrast the nature of the work in Mathematics with that of English. Although the work in Mathematics was *'in the book it is different because it is just sums like something times something.'* The nature of the work in English, which Henry contrasted with that of Mathematics, reinforced his disposition of being a student who was faced with insurmountable obstacles and therefore was unable to participate and whose movement along any learning trajectory in the subject was consistently impeded. The tasks in English, in Henry's view, were very different and clearly much more onerous than those in Mathematics and involved

'reading through and keep reading through to find out information with pages of sheets. There's a lot of reading and writing. That's all it is with English, the reading and I'm not very good at my reading and spelling.'

In Mathematics, although highly reified, the meanings are unambiguous and once understood success does not necessarily depend on writing or reading. In English the onus is on being able to negotiate meanings and, typically, this is through the cultural tools of reading and writing, exercises with which Henry struggled.

Henry placed the stone representing his liking for the mixed ability organisation for English in the sixth circle. He explained that he had placed it this far back because there were more students in the class resulting in the teacher being less available to help individual students. There were students in the class *'who aren't very good at some of the work we do and need help.'* He also made the point that that the teacher might be

unaware of problems which might be occurring for those students experiencing difficulties because the teacher did not *'actually check the work until she marks our books.'* He was also critical of the fact that there were *'some people that are in there that are clever'* and thought that they should be in a higher group because *'they're really good with reading and the work you've got to do and all and they know what they're doing.'* When asked whether these students could be seen as a resource for help, as was suggested by the head of the English Faculty, Henry rejected this suggestion completely because of what he perceived as the proprietorial attitude of the students whom he considered to be more able. *'It doesn't really make any difference because they don't share it out. They just keep themselves quiet and just do the work.'*

The use of the sixth circle reflects Henry's lack of a sense of belonging because he sees the opportunities offered as being scarce and his ability to negotiate meaning through participation and interaction is limited. The community does not embrace diversity. It is not functioning as a community with mutual engagement and a shared repertoire which would legitimate and support Henry's participation, but as one in which those students who are adept at the subject are exercising the power of retaining knowledge for which they have worked. It is evident here that the values of the social order, such as success in examinations resulting in access to better employment etc., are mediating the settings.

In contrast to Year 8 where Henry had suggested that participation might be seen as *'asking and answering questions'* in Year 9 he considered that participation was *'not being scared to tell the teacher you're stuck and you need help.'* He said that he did not participate with the teachers very much but only *'now and again when I know the answers because sometimes I'll guess the answers and get it wrong and get it right every now and then'* and placed the stone representing his class participation in the fourth circle. He said that he participated more in groups than in general class lessons because

'in a group you can discuss it before you answer and all you've got to do is one person put their hand up and just say the answer from everyone,' and placed the stone in the third circle.

The notion of belonging is interpreted differently by different individuals depending upon their histories of participation and social and cultural experiences but it was unlikely that a sense of belonging to an academic community through competence was going to be enjoyed by Henry. Henry enjoyed membership of several communities outside school with which he played football and games and in which he considered he enjoyed a sense of belonging. He saw the criteria demanded for belonging as being able to *'get on really well together and help each other out.'* He did, however, reveal the occasional sense of marginalization even with these groups as he explained that he experienced a sense of belonging to the groups only *'some of the time.'*

When he considered his sense of belonging in settings in school this was dependent on there being the availability of help which I am arguing places the emphasis on participation and the negotiation of meaning. Henry voiced very clearly that this was strongest in the Mathematics classes where the students were *'all the same'* as they were in the Foundation group. He placed the stone representing his sense of belonging in Mathematics in the second circle. The stone representing his sense of belonging in History was placed in the third circle, because although the students shared the same label, there was help but not as much available as in the Mathematics classes. His attitude to his belonging in the English classes was mixed and suggested that Henry's interpretation of belonging in this context differed from that of his sense of belonging in the other settings. It indicated that he recognized his identity of incompetence in English and accepted a necessary commitment to the subject, whatever the classroom organisation, to survive what rigours were required of him by the specified curriculum.

'I know that I'm not very good at my reading and spelling, so with English with that being a lesson where you do a lot of reading and then writing, which I'm not very good at, so then if I can get used to it then I can be prepared for what's going to hit me when I'm in a higher group.'

The lesson which was to be observed took place in the summer term and Henry continued to be taught by Mr. Stuart. Mr. Stuart was very unhappy about having a video recording made of the lesson and I observed the lesson instead. The atmosphere in the classroom was more formal than had been the case in Mr. Tudor's classroom in Year 8, although Mr. Stuart greeted the students warmly as they entered the classroom. There was very little chatting between the students as they entered the classroom. Henry sat at the back of the classroom on the upright arm of the E with Mathilda sitting to his right. Mr. Stuart asked the students to get their books out quickly, which they did. I was interested in the gender balance of the group in that it comprised twenty one boys and three girls, one of whom, I was informed, was *'always away.'*

The lesson was part of a module on 'A Century of Flight' in the National Curriculum Study Unit 'The Twentieth Century.' The focus statement which Mr. Stuart wrote on the board was *'to investigate the effect of aviation on the conduct of The First World War,'* Mr. Stuart divided the lesson into different activities. He had placed text books on the desks before the start of the lesson and the students were instructed to turn to the pages detailing the early development of flight by Orville and Wilbur Wright and the differences between gliding and powered flight. Some parts of the piece were read by Mr. Stuart while others were read by members of the class. Henry was not required to read. Mr. Stuart discussed the material and asked the students what they considered were the most important points of information from the text. Although other students gave answers Henry did not volunteer any answers of his own. The next section of the

lesson was devoted to a video about the First World War and the formation of the Royal Flying Corps, the types of planes which were used and the weapons with which they were equipped. Henry was clearly very interested in this and his attention was engaged throughout the whole of the video which was twenty minutes long.

After the video Mr. Stuart led a class discussion about the video. Henry's participation in this part of the lesson was in direct contrast to that of the earlier part. Mr. Stuart asked several questions and Henry's was the first hand to be raised each time. Mr. Stuart allowed Henry to answer three times, and each of these times Henry gave the correct answer, which Mr. Stuart acknowledged positively, encouraging Henry's participation. During this time two of the boys who were seated at the tables at the side of the E had been talking and Mr. Stuart had reprimanded them once. After five minutes they started to talk again and Mr. Stuart moved one of them to another seat, saying *'I have asked you once to be quiet. Now move over there.'*

In the interviews which I undertook with Mr. Stuart he had been at pains to emphasise that he made the teacher explanations *'a little bit simpler than with the mainstream groups and slowed down the pace considerably,'* to enable a greater access to the material for the students in the Foundation groups. In keeping with this in the observed lesson he wrote some simplified notes on the vertical roller board. These notes were based on the text, the video and on the discussion which had been generated and asked the students to copy them into their books. Mr. Stuart appeared to consider this task unproblematic. The writing extended to two sections of the board and necessitated one section of the board being raised before the second section was written.

Although Mr. Stuart had engaged the students in the discussion and was attempting to open practice to them and extend their participation by simplifying not only the issues

raised by the video but also the nature of the text read at the beginning of the lesson, the effectiveness of this was reduced by the speed at which he wrote and the extent of the writing required. This practice reinforced the notion that competence in literacy was a currency required for proficiency in studying History and being a central participant in the community of school historians. Consequently, Henry's participation in this part of the lesson was severely restricted and his identity of incompetence reinforced. He asked Mathilda for help, but she was also having difficulty. Henry did not ask for the board to be rolled back down and left a space in his book and continued with the new writing once again limiting his opportunities to learn. Clearly situations such as this exacerbated Henry's existing difficulties with completing work and contributed to the perceptions of staff that his understanding was poor. Additionally the absence of continuity in Henry's written text would mean that the material would become incoherent to him should he decided to revisit it, thus perpetuating his lack of understanding.

Mr. Stuart asked the class whether they could see any problems with the guns which were fixed to the planes and told the class to discuss this with the person sitting next to them. Henry and Mathilda engaged in an extensive discussion and the position in which I was sitting enabled me to hear their conversation. All their discussion centred on the task in hand. Mr. Stuart asked for some answers and when the class seemed reluctant to volunteer he said that he would try a demonstration and asked for a volunteer. Henry immediately raised his hand and Mr. Stuart asked him to come to the front of the class. He asked one of the girls to also come to the front.

Mr. Stuart asked Henry to imagine that he was a pilot and the girl to be the propeller to demonstrate that unless the plane were purpose built there was a distinct possibility that any shooting would damage one's own propeller. This demonstration engendered some

good natured laughter and the atmosphere became more relaxed. Mr. Stuart completed the lesson by revisiting the contents of the lesson and then told the students to clear away.

I talked to Henry on the day after the lesson. Henry was quick to point out that he was really enjoying the topic that they were now studying in History and felt that he participated '*much more now in discussions.*' I asked Henry to read the text which had been used in the lesson. The first sentence included the word Zeppelin and although Henry struggled with this he was able to pronounce it with some prompting from me about the lesson. His reading was more fluent than had been the case in Year 9, but was still slow and he had great difficulty with words of more than two syllables, such as *bombarded*. He was also at pains to point out that he still found reading '*very hard*' and that he continued '*struggling with the writing.*' He was able to identify the text correctly as being secondary source.

I then talked to him about the terms used and the content of the lesson. He was very confident about answering these and was able to recall the date of the first flight in 1903 by the Wright brothers and the advantages of powered flight versus gliding. His role play on the previous day had clearly made an impact on him and he was able to describe in some detail the problems of trying to use guns as weapons of warfare in the early aircraft, indicating that his greater participation had allowed him access to the reification of the subject at least in this instance. However, I asked him to consider which military services existed before the development of the Royal Flying Corps, hoping that he would suggest the army and the navy, but despite my offering the answer of the army and asking if he could think of another he was unable to do this.

We moved on to discussing the pilots and their duties, a subject which had not been covered in the lesson, but despite some leading from me Henry was unable to consider

which qualities might be necessary for a pilot in The First World War apart from being *'someone who wanted to fly and had nothing wrong with them...like disabled and that.'*

Henry's competency with the reified tools of the subject, both with the written text and the discourse of the community were still restricted. Although he was able to deal with specific isolated experiences such as the problems of early aircraft, due to dearth of History and its related experiences available to him both within and outside school, he lacked the cultural capital to create a framework from which to hypothesise possible additional or alternative situations.

Henry's participation in the lesson observed in Year 9 differed dramatically between activities which involved reading and writing and those which did not. His involvement with the video appeared to be total and his responses to the questions in the class reinforced this view. His participation, if judged from this involvement could be considered as moving forward on the learning trajectory from being peripheral to being much more central. However, even here he lacked the trajectory of a learner in History to locate his local understanding in a wider sense of the community of History learners. When confronted with the tasks of reading and writing his participation, and therefore his learning and its reinforcement, moved into a position of marginalization once again. Despite Mr. Stuart's success in engaging Henry in the discussions the learning made available to Henry in this setting was curtailed because the methods open to him to record the results of the discussions were restricted to those involving literacy, unlike Year 8 where drawing was acceptable.

In Year 9 Mr. Stuart considered that although Henry was a *'lad who had some finer qualities,'* one of which was the desire to please, Henry was reluctant to demonstrate this desire and also his need to be accepted. Mr. Stuart believed that Henry enjoyed History very much and placed the stone representing Henry's liking of the subject in the first

circle. He explained that he believed this because there was a '*demonstrated interest*' by Henry in the subject, but also because of the nature of the relationships which had been forged within the classroom between Henry, his peers and Mr. Stuart. There was a dissonance between Mr. Stuart's view and that of Henry who placed the stone representing his liking of History in the fourth circle and his belief that Mr. Stuart did not really know about his problems.

When asked to expand upon his perception Mr. Stuart considered that Henry was like most boys of this age who wanted to express their own personality in a secure environment and that he was able to do this in the Foundation group and would '*readily smile and engage on a human level with Mr. Stuart.*' Mr. Stuart also felt that '*at the right time and in the right way*' he would be able to call Henry '*by a nickname which the others might call him,*' but an occasion such as this would have to be chosen carefully because he saw Henry as being '*the type of boy who would be very quick to feel the need to defend his putative masculinity.*' It appeared that Mr. Stuart had attributed a sense of belonging to Henry within the community of the classroom, but recognised the influence of the peer group where being an 'acceptable boy' was more important than being an historian.

I then asked Mr. Stuart about his view on Henry's understanding of the subject. He considered that on Henry's verbal responses he would place his understanding in the third circle. This was, however, in contrast with what level of understanding might be judged from Henry's written work which Mr. Stuart placed in the sixth circle. Mr. Stuart considered that Henry was reluctant to put his thoughts on paper and that he looked to Mr. Stuart for confirmation of the tasks set and reassurance that what he had written was correct. Despite this his writing did not express what Mr. Stuart saw as Henry's true level of understanding. It is clear that neither Mr. Tudor nor Mr. Stuart really

understood the true consequences of the literacy difficulties which Henry experienced for his access to the discourse of History or other reifications of the subject. Mr. Stuart also commented that Henry's progress was hindered by *'patchy attendance.'* He thought that Henry would see his own understanding as being *'in circle 2, but this boy would put himself down as a 7 in written work.'*

I discussed Henry's participation in class lessons with Mr. Stuart who considered that Henry's participation was high and placed the stone representing this in the first circle because he was *'one of the stronger members of the class in terms of confidence and he knows that he knows the subject, but he knows that he can't write it down.'* It appears from this interpretation that Mr. Stuart had attributed Henry's problems solely to the overt representations of his difficulties with literacy rather than the results of these on the quality of his participation and engagement with reification and the discourse of the subject. Additionally Mr. Stuart did not appear to be aware of Henry's difficulties of negotiating meanings with the subject independently at a deeper level, such as was evidenced by his responses to my questions on the lesson.

Mr. Stuart stated that he believed that Henry had shown great interest in the topic of aviation which was being studied at the time and had participated well. When I questioned how Henry had fared in small group work Mr. Stuart's explanation illustrated his view that learning worked most successfully when approached as an individual task and not as emerging between people.

'He is in a very small group as it is. Small group work would be in pairs and I have not set any as such, but then children do co-operate with each other. In the Foundation group one of the particular features is that the children have very strong ideas about who they want to work with. They are much more reluctant to work with people other than their friends, than students in other groups. Given that I see no

reason for introducing the possibility of disorder or distraction into any of the lessons.

I do not introduce paired work with the express intention that I am going to pair this boy with someone else. The chances are that they are not going to get on.'

Some definite issues emerge from the story of Henry. Certainly Mr. Stuart was aware of Henry's reluctance, and that of some of the other students within this group, to work with students other than those who were their friends, but seemed not to appreciate the reassurance that the support of friends offered those students who experienced considerable and persistence difficulties. He assumed that students would co-operate with each other yet was unwilling to attempt any '*small group work*' because of the '*possibility of disorder or distraction.*' Mr. Stuart perceived Henry as being '*one of the stronger members of the class in terms of confidence,*' but for Henry this confidence was restricted to certain activities and was not universal in his experiences of the settings of the History classroom in Year 9. His selective participation reinforced the view of Mr. Tudor that this participation was largely dependent on Henry's interest in the subject matter under consideration. Henry's responses to the questions about the lesson observed in Year 9 contributed to this perception, while revealing that the History available to him both inside and outside school and his participation in it was insufficient to extend his understanding beyond a basic level.

Harter, (1990) suggests that there should be a mutuality between an individual's idea of self and that which significant others hold in the successful formation of identity. There appears to be a lack of mutuality between the teachers' views of Henry's understanding and his own, not only from Henry's perspective but also that of the teachers. The view which Henry sees teachers having of him and the lack of mutuality is a potent factor in maintaining Henry's overarching identity of a student who '*struggles*' in the arena of school generally. Henry's experiences in the settings in which mixed ability groupings

were employed were in direct contrast to expectations of those staff who implemented the system. Mixed ability groupings in Cullishaven School were based on a sincere commitment to the notions of human rights, the policy of inclusion, respect for the individual, concern for their self-esteem and the expectation that those students who did not experience difficulties would automatically help those who did. For Henry the philosophies which underlay the use of mixed ability groupings were of little import. Because of the difficulties he experienced and each setting to which he carried these, his disposition of being a student who was '*often struggling*' became more entrenched. Learning available to him through engaging with the specified curriculum, i.e. the written texts was sporadic and thus his negotiation with and ownership of meaning within these subjects was sparse. '*What the subject matter comes to mean in the lives of learners still depends on the forms of participation available to them.*' (Wenger, 1998 p.265). The participation available to Henry in these settings meant that his position in a community of learners remained marginal rather than peripheral.

Any learning trajectory is contributed to by experiences both within and outside the classroom. The learning available to Henry outside school was in activities with his family and friends, but because of the difficulties he experienced with literacy he was reluctant to participate in those in which his identity of incompetence was reinforced. Henry's view of his understanding was distorted because he did not have access to the real perception of what 'doing History' entailed and thus he attributed any problems which he encountered solely to the difficulties he experienced with literacy. Henry's participation in discussions such as that in Mr. Stuart's class in Year 9 might support and further Henry's journey on the learning trajectory. However, the demands of the History curriculum in particular and the curriculum generally stipulate that valued outcomes of assessment are dependent upon written evidence. Thus Henry's contribution to the community of schooled historians is unlikely to be acknowledged. If '*education places*

students on an outbound trajectory toward a broad field of possible identities' (Wenger, 1998 p.263) then it would seem that the education system had thus far failed Henry. The evidence gained in this research suggests that it has reinforced Henry's identity of incompetence and made no interruption on his journey on the learning trajectory of how to be a marginalized member of the literate society.

CHAPTER 6

‘I am kind, lightish and not loud’ - The story of Eleanor

Eleanor lived with both parents fifteen miles from the town in which Cullishaven School was situated. The family had originally lived within the catchment area of Cullishaven School but had moved house and Eleanor’s parents wished her to continue her education at Cullishaven School, despite the problems with transport that this caused. Eleanor was on Stage 3 of the school’s Special Educational Needs register and was described on this as having ‘literacy problems’ but did not receive any ancillary help in the classroom. She had achieved a Level 3 for English in her Key Stage Two Standardised Assessment Tests and in her Cognitive Ability Test in Year 7 had registered 80% for Verbal Reasoning and 70% for Non-Verbal Reasoning giving her an overall score of 73%.

When Eleanor attended the first interview of Year 8 she was quiet, polite, appeared relaxed, interested in the research and enthusiastic about participating, although there were some questions with which she became more reticent and I considered that it was inappropriate to investigate those further. She chose a stone which she described as being ‘*quite light*’ to represent the way that she saw herself, because she explained that she was ‘*kind and lightish and not loud.*’ She stated that she did not participate in any organised activities at lunch time, but spent much of the time in the library with her friends, because although she was ‘*not very good at reading and spelling and things,*’ her aim was to have a career as a librarian. After school activities presented a problem for her because of the distance that she lived from the school and the vagaries of rural transport and therefore any relationships which she might have forged with sympathetic peers from school tended to be conducted in school time. The church which she and her parents attended was situated in the neighbourhood of Cullishaven School and because of the relationships established, their attendance at that church had continued after the family had moved house.

Her responses indicated that she was conscientious about completing her homework which took *'about an hour,'* before participating in any hobbies or leisure time activities. She explained that she found her English homework the most difficult and time consuming to complete as she was *'not very good at spelling and reading and things and it is sometimes really hard like to write things up and all.'* Her mother was very supportive and was the first person that Eleanor would approach for help with homework about how to carry out the tasks and *'things what to say and that'* and was keen to show Eleanor how to use reference books such as a dictionary.

Eleanor revealed that she had a younger brother who was disabled and she spent much of her time after doing her homework helping and playing with him. It was clear from the way in which she spoke about him that there was a strong bond between them and she enjoyed the time that she spent with him, but this left little time available to establish relationships with peers in her immediate locality. She explained that she never went to the cinema, and only watched *'a bit of telly.... about an hour'* in the evenings during term time, and more during holidays, but this viewing was always restricted to programmes about animals through her own preference. She enjoyed swimming, but participating in this activity tended to be only during the holidays.

Her strong affiliation to her faith and the sense of belonging which she experienced at her church encouraged her to read her bible regularly which she enjoyed. Despite Eleanor's difficulties with literacy she used the school library to borrow books about animals in which she was very interested and other people bought her magazines which were concerned with animals. She was also a member of her local library which she used to *'find information for school and things on certain bits and bobs.'* Her access to History outside school and any learning made available from this was restricted by her own choices as she did not find books or programmes about the subject *'interesting really.'*

However, she had enjoyed the video of Titanic but did not consider that this was 'History' as she had seen it on a video and therefore she would not construe it as being 'History', perhaps indicating that, due to her constrained access to the cultural capital of the subject, Eleanor's construction of History was restricted to those events or artefacts which were not extant in her lifetime.

Eleanor explained that her favourite subject was art and chose a small colourful stone to represent the subject and the '*different colours that you get in it,*' placing the stone in the second section. She did however comment that she enjoyed the subject more than she felt she understood it and placed the stone in the third section to represent her understanding. The subject which she enjoyed least was drama and her attitude to this was very negative choosing a stone which she considered to be '*plain and dull*' to represent the subject and placing it in the sixth section also saying that it should remain there to represent her understanding of the subject as she felt that she hardly understood '*any of it.*' Her construction of Drama as being '*plain and dull*' was not one which I had encountered before, but when I tried to probe further as to the reasons for this, she became resistant and said emphatically, '*I just don't like it.*' Although Eleanor did not articulate the reasons for her dislike of the subject it is not difficult to speculate what these might have been. Eleanor, with her rather reserved personality would have viewed the nature and demands of the subject for public displays such as reading aloud, role play and improvisation as constructing a forum in which she did not wish to participate.

Eleanor chose a large grey heavily textured stone to represent her view of History and explained that it looked '*quite old*' and said that it made her '*think of going back in time.*' She did not like the subject particularly and placed the stone in the fourth circle to represent this. Her understanding was, she felt, lower even than her liking of the subject and placed the stone in the sixth circle to represent this. She did however believe that

Mr. Tudor saw her understanding of the subject as being higher and placed the stone to represent this in section four. She explained that she considered his perception of her understanding to be higher because of her behaviour in class and the fact that she would *'try my best and try to take notice in the lessons.'* She also stated that because she took time to present her work neatly she believed that this would positively affect Mr. Tudor's perception of her understanding. She explained that if she was *'not quite understanding something'* in a History lesson she would ask her friends for help first before asking Mr. Tudor.

Eleanor said that she enjoyed Geography slightly more than History and chose a stone which reminded her of *'the countryside and outside,'* and that she considered that she understood the subject more than History and placed her understanding in the fourth circle. When asked where she would place the teacher's perception of her understanding she answered after a long pause and placed it in the sixth circle. The reason for this, she explained was that the teacher, Mrs. Rivers, who was *'really nice'* appeared to spend more time with Eleanor when she considered there might be a problem. It was clear that Mrs. Rivers modified her practice strongly to accommodate any difficulties which the students encountered. As Eleanor explained:

'She's quite friendly and helps me a lot and like...she helps other people, but I feel like she comes to me a lot more than what other people....like.....When we're in a test she will get like someone to help me and things...like to read the questions out.'

Eleanor appeared to have a naive concept of what is required as evidence of understanding. While she was aware that Mrs. Rivers offered extra help, Eleanor did not associate this with her written or verbal contributions and did not, initially, refer to any difficulties which she experienced with literacy. Instead, she seemed to associate the need for help with difficulties with the subject of Geography rather than literacy. She also wrongly assumed that presentation and good behaviour represented understanding in

the view of Mr. Tudor. It is likely that neat presentation and good behaviour are arena criteria which Eleanor was implementing.

Her favourite Humanities subject was Religious Education which she both enjoyed and understood more than either of the other two subjects. She placed a rough edged stone which she considered to look old and reminded her of '*all the people back then and things*' in the second circle to represent not only her liking and understanding of the subject, but also her perception of the teacher's view of her understanding. Eleanor's enjoyment of Religious Education reflected the engagement with the subject which she had not only within school but outside and the success she achieved in negotiating meanings within it. Although the relationships within the community of school Religious Education of which she was a part were not what she would have wished, those in her church community mediated the effects of these sufficiently to support her interest and liking of the subject in school.

As the interview progressed it emerged that the influences which had the greatest impact on Eleanor were her Christian faith, her family and the church which she attended regularly and a picture began to form of the isolation which Eleanor experienced at school because of the nature of the relationships she experienced with the rest of her peers. She said that she strongly identified with the values which were expressed in the settings of her church and family, but reconciliation was difficult between the identities which she attributed from these and the development of a sense of belonging or construction of a positive identity in many of the classroom settings in the arena of school. She considered that the majority of her peers did '*not like*' her and as their behaviour was '*loud*' and made her feel uncomfortable there seemed little prospect of her fitting into their friendship groups. There appeared to be minimal correspondence between the largely secular factors which contributed to the different settings in school

and the experiences which Eleanor brought to these and she was acutely aware of the contrast between the apparent extensive interaction between the rest of her peers and her lack of identification with them or their values. She explained that she *'only had a couple of friends which is quite upsetting'* and that she didn't *'get on very well with the others in the tutor group.'*

It was the fact that there were a few other friends who were in her English group which led Eleanor to prefer these lessons although there was no additional help for her. Despite this she was reluctant to join in with discussions in lessons generally and did not *'get involved much really,'* as she considered that she was *'not very good at discussion and things.'* When asked what she considered were the barriers to her becoming more involved she revealed that it was *'because of friends really, well, not friends, enemies I should say.'* She believed that these students did not like her, although as she explained, *'I would like to get on with them really,'* but as a result of this perceived dislike they were reluctant to allow her to become involved with the discussions. For this reason and the fact that she *'did not get on with the class'* generally she felt she had no alternative but to work on her own. She said that she had *'just got so used to working on my own that I just quite like it on my own now.'* Holland et al. (1998) argue that positional identities develop over time. The influences which the peers exerted constrained Eleanor's participation in the community and the joint endeavour and this constraint limited her learning. The identity of a solitary learner which she had reluctantly appropriated over time to accommodate this experience had now become a disposition.

When asked to consider her participation in a lesson in History which was taught in a mixed ability tutor group situation she placed the stone in the sixth circle and explained that this lack of participation was due to the anticipated reaction of the other members of the class. *'Sometimes I feel like if I speak and all...I'll get laughed at by the others if I*

say something wrong so I just like keep quiet.' She contrasted this with her participation in a small group situation with her two friends in which she considered that she *'joined in quite well'*, and placed the stone representing this in the second circle. Even here, however, problems occurred sometimes because the other two girls tended to work together and this left Eleanor working alone and being unable once again to share the task of negotiating the concepts of the subject.

Working in a larger group of about six students was a greater problem and Eleanor was more negative about this placing the stone representing her participation in this situation in the seventh circle. She considered that her two friends also had problems as they did not *'get on with anyone else either really.'* This meant that not only were there limited options open to them when trying to work collaboratively in a larger group situation, but their access to the reification of the subject as understood by students was also constrained. As Eleanor explained, *'there's no-one else to work with. There's no-one else wants to work with us.'* Eleanor explained at the end of the interview that she had found it *'very helpful, because I am telling people what I am really like and I don't normally do that.'*

Clearly Eleanor felt that there was a great deal of resistance and rejection taking place generally in lessons for her most of the time and for some of the time for her two friends. Her demeanour, although very positive for the rest of the interview, indicated that she was very upset by this situation and, although I was interested in unearthing the possible reasons for this rejection, did not continue along this path for fear of affecting her more. I suggest that Eleanor suffered a lack of a sense of belonging from what Wenger (1998) would consider marginalisation and therefore a lack of belonging because of her identity of incompetence with literacy and inability to participate in the discourse of the History classroom leading to a lack of understanding. However I also suggest that not only she

but also her two friends to some extent additionally experienced non-legitimated peripheral participation, or, as described by Griffiths, (2005) of '*not being allowed in,*' by the other students enacting the power which Wenger (1998) considers is part of the '*politics of participation*'(p.91) and which they had quite illegitimately appropriated. Extended identities are usually associated with teachers' practices as teachers are seen as being powerful in orchestrating settings. Wenger (1998) argues that mutuality depends on connecting to what you know and do not know and to people who have the 'know-how' that you need. Participation is about developing relationships and, in the arena of school, peers are powerful. In this case it appears that the peers were refusing to allow connections to be made to their 'know-how.'

The lesson that I observed was the introduction to the Expansion of Trade and Industry. Mr. Tudor was already in the classroom and had written the heading and the learning objective on the board. He greeted the students warmly asking them how they were. He asked them to settle down quickly and to get their exercise books out. Eleanor sat at a table next to another girl and four boys. The table was one removed from Mr. Tudor's desk. Eleanor sat slightly turned away from the other students already establishing her separateness from them. Mr. Tudor explained the content of the module and asked the class if any of them knew which century 1750 was in. Several students raised their hands, but Eleanor did not respond and one student answered correctly the eighteenth century. Mr. Tudor asked them to write the heading and the learning objective in their exercise books. He then asked them to think about what the word 'transformed' meant and when one student said '*changed*' Mr. Tudor responded '*mm, but more than that.*' Another student said '*changed beyond all recognition*' and Mr. Tudor agreed that this was '*absolutely right.*' During this time there was no response from Eleanor who was still writing the heading and the learning objective. The difficulties that she experienced

with literacy meant that time taken to read and copy from the board reduced opportunities to engage with the discourse of the classroom and therefore her learning.

The next task set was for the students to turn to the page in the text book which had two pictures contrasting Manchester in 1750 and 1900. Mr. Tudor instructed the students to *'discuss the kinds of things you notice about Manchester in 1750 with the person sitting next to you.'* The girl sitting next to Eleanor turned to one of the boys sitting adjacent to her and started to discuss the picture. Eleanor tapped the girl on the arm, but she did not respond and continued to talk to the boy and also his partner who sat next to him. Eleanor did not speak to the two boys who were sitting opposite her. The discussion went on for approximately two minutes during which time Eleanor did not try to engage anyone else in conversation. This was clearly an example of the exclusion Eleanor suffered at the hands of her peers and emphasised her identity of a solitary learner. Mr. Tudor then asked the students what they had noticed about Manchester in 1750. Several students raised their hands and offered suggestions about there being fields, a river and horses and cows being used as transport, clear skies and trees. Eleanor raised her hand and said that there were *'animals in the field,'* indicating the focus of her interest. As each student offered a suggestion Mr. Tudor responded by saying *'yes, good,'* and writing each suggestion on the board.

Mr. Tudor asked the students to look at the houses in the picture and to consider how they were arranged. One boy answered that they were in a line and Mr. Tudor agreed and explained that this was termed *'linear development.'* He then asked them if anyone knew what the word was which began with 'R' to describe Manchester in 1750. Several boys raised their hands, but only one girl. Mr. Tudor asked one of the boys who replied *'rural,'* to which Mr. Tudor responded *'excellent,'* and wrote the word on the board.

Mr. Tudor required the students to look at the picture of Manchester in 1900 and to discuss with the person sitting next to them or the group the factors that had changed in Manchester between 1750 and 1900. Eleanor started to talk to the girl sitting next to her who responded initially, but then turned to talk to the boys who were already discussing the picture and joined in with their discussion. At no point in the remaining two minutes was Eleanor included in the discussion, reinforcing her experience of isolation once again and denying her access to practice and thus participation in the joint enterprise and constraining her agency. She spent approximately thirty seconds looking at the rest of the group and spent the remainder of the time looking at the text book. During the group discussion Mr. Tudor visited two tables and questioned the students on their observations, then distributed packs of pictures each labelled with a letter from A to K, some of which represented pre-industrial Manchester and others representing industrialised Manchester.

Mr. Tudor drew the attention of the class to the front and asked for contributions for words to describe the changes to Manchester. Several students both boys and girls raised their hands. Eleanor was not among these, indicating either her lack of grasp of what was required or her reluctance to offer an answer because of fear of unfavourable responses from her peers. Mr. Tudor took contributions from a number of boys, but not from any girls. The answers were, *'pollution, factories, more houses, no greenery'*. One boy offered the word *'industrialisation,'* to which Mr. Tudor responded, *'yes, very well done.'* As before as the students offered the suggestions Mr. Tudor wrote them on the board. He then asked for the word beginning with 'u' which would describe Manchester in 1900 and which was the opposite of rural. One boy responded with the word *'urban.'* Mr. Tudor then drew the attention of the class to the links which could be seen between the factories and the growth of population and consequent increase in housing.

Mr. Tudor asked the students to look at the packs of sources which had been distributed and to make a list of letters from A to K down the side of the page underneath the heading in their exercise books. He instructed them to discuss with each other and then to write beside each letter whether they thought that the source came from closer to 1750 or 1900. Some of the class started to do this, but there was some confusion and one student asked whether the writing had to be done on the source sheets. Mr. Tudor again repeated the instructions, but the students on Eleanor's table still appeared confused and sat looking at the board. Mr. Tudor realised that they had not understood and taking responsibility for the confusion said, '*I have not explained this properly,*' and opened up practice to them explaining again what was required, this time giving examples on the board.

The boys on Eleanor's table started to discuss and Eleanor turned to the girl beside her, but the girl did not respond and worked alone, once again excluding Eleanor from the joint enterprise. Eleanor started to work alone, but the girl then asked her a question, but Eleanor shook her head. She looked at the sources, looked at the board and yawned. It was becoming clear that Eleanor's being prevented from having connection with the practices of the group and therefore the enterprise of the class as a whole was resulting in her steady disengagement from participation and learning. Eleanor once again spoke to the girl who answered her but without looking at her and continued to work alone. Eleanor made a comment to the boy who was sitting opposite her and they engaged in a brief conversation. Eleanor then made another comment to the girl who once again did not respond. The rest of the table continued discussing and writing. During the discussion time Mr. Tudor, once again, visited the tables to discuss the suggestions with the students.

Mr. Tudor asked the students to look to the front and said that the next heading that they should write was Transport.’ They should then write down the letter of each source which they considered ‘*was to do with transport.*’ Eleanor wrote down the heading but did not continue. She asked the girl sitting next to her, who shrugged and then Eleanor raised her hand and asked Mr. Tudor whether one particular source ‘*was to do with transport,*’ to which he replied, ‘*yes, that’s right. Well done.*’ Eleanor continued to work alone. In the interview Eleanor had asserted that her main source of support was from friends rather than the teacher, but the interactions with the peers in her group indicated that shared practice in this instance was minimal and the support virtually non-existent.

After two minutes Mr. Tudor asked the class to write a new heading in their exercise books, that of ‘Industry’ and to do the same exercise as for that of transport. Eleanor had not yet finished the exercise on Transport and continued with that. After one and half minutes she raised her hand and asked Mr. Tudor whether ‘Industry’ was the next heading. He agreed that it was and Eleanor wrote down the heading and started to work on that section, but after only one minute Mr. Tudor wrote the next heading on the board that of ‘Different types of power’ and instructed the class to complete the sections as before. The pace of the lesson appeared to be too fast as it was clear that Eleanor was falling behind but she continued to work alone and did not ask for any help from anyone on her table. Despite Mr. Tudor’s good relationship with the class he seemed unaware of the problems that the pace of the lesson had on the participation and engagement with the discourse of the subject for students such as Eleanor. This issue also resonated with the comments made by Mrs. King and illustrated that the demands of the National Curriculum and the amount of material which was considered necessary to cover in a lesson disadvantaged students such as Eleanor.

Mr. Tudor asked for any responses to the last section and one girl said that there was a train in one of the pictures. Mr. Tudor discussed what sort of power that might represent and then asked whether anyone could see anything which might represent wind power. Eleanor raised her hand and asked whether he meant wind that dried washing. Mr. Tudor laughed and said *'good idea, but we are looking for wind that powers something such as windmill.'* The bell signalled the end of the lesson and Mr. Tudor asked the students to put their books away. Eleanor cleared away and chatted to the girl at her table and then walked out of the classroom with her.

Eleanor's participation in the lesson was defined by the relationships in which she was embedded, however reluctantly, in the tutor group. Wenger (1998) argues that *'being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community's practice, just as engagement is what defines belonging'* (p.4). Eleanor's difficulties with literacy and her reticence to volunteer answers, due to apprehension about possible negative peer reaction, precluded engagement with the reifications and practice of the community of schooled historians in class discussions, removing any possibility of a sense of belonging due to competence. Neither were the relationships in the small group such that a sense of belonging engendered by emotional dependence could be created. Eleanor's disposition of the solitary learner was thus reinforced in two areas further constraining her participation and access to negotiation of meaning.

The interview on understanding of the lesson took place on the following day. I asked Eleanor whether she could remember which century 1750 was in but she was unable to do so. I asked her to read an extract from the textbook which was used for the lesson. Her reading was very hesitant and she had difficulty in deciphering the word 'textiles', and was unable to read the word 'ventilation.' I read it for her and explained what it meant and the effects of bad ventilation in the factories. I asked her to look at the picture

of Manchester in 1750 and asked for some of the words that had been used to describe Manchester in 1750 and she said that there was,

'lots of space, um fields...there were lots of fields.....there were lots of animals. It looks pretty bright and you can see a lot fields and things.'

I then asked her to look at the picture of Manchester in 1900 and to describe the differences. She said that it was *'quite dull with smoke and fumes everywhere and packed.'* I asked her to explain why it was different and what she thought caused this pollution and what could be seen there which could not be seen in the picture of 1750. Despite a great deal of scaffolding from me she was unable to identify the factories in the picture and said that she thought they were houses. I then moved on to ask her what the words were which Mr. Tudor had discussed with the class which meant 'changing beyond all recognition,' a word which meant 'the countryside' and a word which meant 'towns,' but despite my giving her the letter which started each word she was unable to remember transformation, rural and urban.

I returned to the source from the textbook that Eleanor had read at the beginning of the interview and referred her to the title of the book from which it had been taken – Britain from 1700 written in 1986 and asked her to identify whether it was a primary or a secondary source. Eleanor replied that it was a primary source because *'it was the way it was written.'* I then asked Eleanor why Manchester might have been chosen as an example for the text book and she correctly answered, pointing to the pictures that it was because it had changed completely from *'that to that.'* It appeared that Eleanor, like Henry, lacked any historical concepts and was able only to answer in simple terms, not fully understanding what 'doing History' meant. This may be attributable to her limited access to the learning resource of peers and the pace of the lessons.

I encouraged Eleanor to hypothesise about the nature of demographic changes by comparing a map in the textbook detailing centres of population in 1750 with that of another one detailing those of 1900. She correctly identified that the main centres of population in 1750 were London, Bristol and Nottingham and for 1900 as being London, Bath, Bristol, Birmingham, Bedford, Liverpool and Manchester. Despite Mr. Tudor having covered the reasons for population growth in the industrial centres and the reasons for this in the lesson on the previous day Eleanor was unable to make any causal connection

I moved on to looking at the sources A to K which had been used in the lesson on the previous day and repeated the task of identifying whether each picture might be seen as being closer to 1750 or 1900. She correctly identified all the pictures and gave appropriate reasons for her decision, such as a picture of a woman working at a spinning wheel as being closer to 1750 because she was working in her own home and not in a factory and a picture of a railway station as being closer to 1900 because '*they didn't have trains in 1750.*' The reason is unclear as to why Eleanor was able to give the correct answer for this and not for the earlier question, but I speculate that Eleanor was presented with a visual resource, on which there had been some discussion in the lesson, whereas the question about the possible reasons for population growth had been a contingent question which needed hypothesis which, at this stage, Eleanor was unable to do.

It was clear that for the majority of the questions Eleanor was able to answer at a basic level but, despite giving the correct reason for the choice of Manchester as an example of industrial change and being able to identify the approximate dates of the sources, she was unable to grapple with the more complex and interrelated layers of cause and effect. Claxton (1993) argues that students' understandings are constructed from the people and

social and cultural tools with which they come into contact. Eleanor's restricted access to participation in the process of reification in History and its textual resources, both within school and outside, curtailed her learning and therefore understanding.

Mr. Tudor agreed to discuss his view of Eleanor's participation and progress, but admitted that she was the student '*that I know least well....she is a very hard girl to get a handle on.*' He chose a stone which was very dark and which he considered was '*heavy and ponderous,*' but could not articulate why he had chosen this stone particularly, except that he felt that his perception of Eleanor as a person could be represented by this. This was an interesting choice and one which did not accord with Eleanor's own view of herself as being '*light.*' It did, however, reflect quite accurately certain aspects of Eleanor's behaviour in the lesson when confronted with the deliberate rejection by the girl with whom she wished to work and also in the interview when discussing her lack of supportive relationships. Wenger (1998) argues that individuals experience boundaries when unable to engage fully in activities and this experience remains an enduring part of the identity. Eleanor's repeated experiences of boundaries being constructed by her peers had been assimilated into her identity and manifested itself in the demeanour which was displayed in lessons. It also seemed that experience of not belonging which was determined by her peers had extended to relationships with some of the staff and disallowed any significant engagement with them.

Mr. Tudor chose the borderline of the second and third circles to represent what he saw as Eleanor's liking of History. He acknowledged that it was probably not her favourite subject, but that he would be surprised if she strongly disliked it as being one of her '*major turn-off subjects,*' and that she seemed '*happy enough to go along with it.*' This perception was interesting when compared with that of Eleanor towards the subject. While she did not enjoy the subject particularly and placed the stone representing her

liking of the subject in the fourth circle she clearly did not dislike it as much as Drama which had been placed in the sixth circle.

Mr. Tudor considered that Eleanor had a *'good basic understanding of the ideas of the subject,'* and placed the stone representing this in the fourth circle. He considered that Eleanor had *'got the sequencing.'* He believed that she was able to make a link cross-referencing events if the links were straightforward. He also suggested that Eleanor was able to *'reflect on things,'* and that she was beginning to be able to evaluate bias and *'getting to grips with some of the analytical stuff.'* He believed that Eleanor was able now to move from the concrete into the abstract, but that she related to the subject more if there were *'a human dimension, that is a good story,'* whereas there was a greater problem for her if the subjects being covered were concerned with politics or religion. This was a positive and encouraging analysis of Eleanor's understanding, but one which I do not think that she would recognise, nor which I considered would accurately reflect her responses in the interview on understanding the lesson. Mr. Tudor considered that there would be a correspondence between Eleanor's view of her understanding and his. This was not correct however as Eleanor had believed that her understanding was much lower, but that Mr. Tudor would, in fact, attribute her with a higher level of understanding which was not correct.

Mr. Tudor believed that there had been a decrease in Eleanor's participation during the past two months and placed her current participation in class as being in the sixth circle. He explained that she had *'not switched off, but withdrawn a little bit.'* He attributed this to the dynamic of the tutor group. He explained that,

'there are some funny things going on in that group. It is not....I don't think that it is the easiest group in which to be female. There are one or two lads in there, who, I think are quite loutish and who have quite an impact on the learning environment.'

This analysis coincided with Eleanor's view that some of her peers were 'loud' and their attitude and possible negative reaction to her contributions inhibited her verbal participation. My observation had indicated that some of the boys within the group had been more vociferous than the girls when attempting to gain Mr. Tudor's attention and that he had in fact paid more attention to the boys generally than the girls.

It appeared from Mr. Tudor's observations that not only Eleanor, but also some of the other girls in the class were affected by the attitude of the boys. He revealed that,

'there are a couple of lads who are particularly loutish and they were away a couple of weeks ago and I noticed what a changed atmosphere there was and how some of the girls relaxed and some of the girls who hadn't contributed for quite a long time seemed to say "Oh I think that I will have a sort of tentative answer. I don't think that Eleanor is overpowered by it, but I don't think that she contributes as much as she would in a different context.'

He said that other members of the Humanities staff had confirmed that the dynamic in the group was not particularly productive and that it was felt that the behaviour of some of the boys was '*detrimental and has some impact on the girls.*' I observed that Mr. Tudor, while being friendly with the class and encouraging a relaxed atmosphere, quickly picked up on antisocial aspects of behaviour in his classroom and admonished those responsible. It is not possible to say, however, how this was dealt with by other members of the faculty with the exception of Mr. Stuart who maintained rigorous control in his classroom. As the events experienced by students do not remain in isolation, but are taken from one classroom to another and thus contribute to the construction of each setting by the students, it is clear to see that for Eleanor certainly and possibly several of the other girls in the tutor group anticipation of an unsympathetic or disagreeable environment would curtail participation and therefore learning in any other settings in which the tutor group were taught together.

Mr. Tudor considered that Eleanor's participation in a group would be higher and placed the stone in the third circle. He acknowledged that Eleanor was not '*somebody that I have watched closely working in a group.*' On reflection, he considered that, on the occasions that he had observed her participation in a group situation, she had contributed to the group, but believed that Eleanor participated more if '*there was somebody else in the group drawing her out.*' He commented that the small group that Eleanor sat with was a mixed boys and girls group which was not the same with the other groups who were in that class. The boys in that group were '*nice*' and not like some of the other '*loutish*' ones. My observations confirmed that the boys at the table at which Eleanor sat were quiet and when discussing concentrated on each other or the rest of group around the table. The other girl on the table, however, on this occasion certainly participated with the boys on the table, but did not engage with Eleanor sufficiently during the discussions to be construed as '*drawing her out.*'

In the interview in Year 9, after experiencing teaching in the Foundation group, Eleanor was again enthusiastic about participating. She appeared to be relaxed but more confident than she had been in Year 8 and chose a small rosy coloured smooth stone which she described as '*friendly and soft*' to represent her. She explained that her friendship group had increased and changed and that she did not spend '*that much time*' with one of the girls with whom she had been friends in Year 8 because the friend was involved in Drama at lunchtimes. Although Eleanor said that she still did not participate in any activities organised by the school at lunchtimes she enjoyed this time because she spend most of it talking to her friends. Her hobbies had remained the same as in Year 8, and she now regularly attended a church which was local to where she lived and explained, '*all the people there are friendly and I get on really well with them.*'

At home she continued to spend a large proportion of her time after completing her homework, which she estimated took her about an hour per night, entertaining her younger brother. Her relationship with him remained strong and she enjoyed the time that she spent with him. She had started to go to the cinema, but '*not more than once a month,*' and her television viewing had increased to approximately two hours per night, watching soap operas regularly. The learning made available to her about History outside school had increased slightly and she watched some television programmes about the subject, '*but only those to do with Hitler, sometimes.*' Eleanor continued to use both the school library and her local library, but her reading for pleasure was still restricted to '*stories about animals.*' She explained that she felt much more confident with her reading and only needed help with '*a few big words.*' Her ambition was still to be a librarian and she was already thinking about spending her two week's work experience in Year 10 at the public library.

Eleanor revealed that she was enjoying all Humanities subjects more in Year 9 than she had in Year 8 and attributed this to the fact that the students were now in much smaller groups in which she felt comfortable and that she was '*understanding more what the teacher is saying than what I did in Year 8.*' The additional benefit for Eleanor being in the Foundation group was that there was an ancillary helper on an occasional basis and, although he was specifically designated to help one particular student, he was also available sometimes to help the other students in the group, one of them being Eleanor. Eleanor perceived one distinct disadvantage to the Humanities programme in Year 9 and that was the modular system. She placed a stone representing her attitude towards this on the outer edges of the sixth circle and considered that having to move from one discipline to another had meant that insufficient time was spend on individual subjects. This resulted in a '*feeling of not exactly rushing the work, but moving around too much and not focusing on it as long as you would before.*' She explained that she preferred to

spend longer on each topic of work because it gave her '*a better understanding rather than jumping into something else really quickly.*' This resonated with the similar criticism that Mr. Stuart had made of this particular facet of the organisation and indicates that Eleanor needed time to reflect on and consolidate the work which had been covered.

The stone that she chose to represent History was a stone which she considered was '*nice and soft,*' indicating a more positive attitude towards the subject and placed the stone representing her liking of the subject in the third circle. She was also more positive about her understanding of History than in Year 8 and placed the stone in the fourth circle to represent this improvement. This was significantly better than in Year 8 when she had placed it in the sixth circle. She believed that Mr. Tudor would also consider her understanding to be in the same place.

Eleanor considered that participation was '*being in groups and just working with other people.*' When asked whether she considered sitting listening to the teacher talking could be understood as participation she was unsure as she explained, '*well, yes, but you are not exactly with other people in the tutor group then. You are just with the teacher talking and you are listening.*' She said that her participation generally not only in History class lessons but also in the other Humanities subjects had improved a great deal in Year 9 and placed the stone to represent this in the second circle. She explained that in Year 9 she now felt more comfortable with the Foundation group that she was in and that they all were '*able to listen to one another.*' This was in sharp contrast to the situation in Year 8 when the lack of a sense of belonging and the possible negative reactions of her peers had affected her concentration and participation and therefore her learning. She explained,

'we were all in the tutor group and you think about other people and...you think what other people are thinking and then you don't really concentrate as much as what you should listen properly.'

She also admitted that she had been influenced by the behaviour of the boys in Year 8.

When pressed to explain this she laughed and said,

'well, you know what boys are like. They don't always get on with their work and mess around and things... ..but I suppose it depends on what the person is like really.'

It was clear that Eleanor had developed a much more positive attitude towards Humanities lessons and was now able to view the experiences of the previous year with more equanimity. However, she saw her participation in a group situation as being lower than that of general class participation and placed the stone in the fourth circle. Despite feeling that she *'got on'* with more people in the Foundation group, one of her friends had gone into another group and she said that she still preferred to work alone and was *'one for like working, writing and listening more on my own than I do in groups.'*

Eleanor said that she was pleased to be in the Foundation group where she felt she belonged and where she *'got on'* with quite a few of the people. She did not, however, feel that her sense of belonging in the Foundation group was as great as that which she experienced with the congregation of the church which she attended. She considered that the sense of belonging enjoyed in the church was as high as it could possibly be and there was reciprocity in the situation because she considered that the church *'belongs to me.'* She was disappointed that most of the girls she had become friendly with in Year 9 were now in different groups, but *'apart from that I don't mind being in the group.'*

Her increased sense of ease in the Humanities lessons contrasted with her discomfort in the mixed ability English lessons. She attributed this to the fact that the smaller groups in Humanities lessons meant that the teachers had more time than those in English

lessons to *'explain things.'* Additionally, she revealed that she *'got on better with most of the Foundation group than what I do with the English group.'* She experienced a sense of rejection from some of the members of the English group and explained, *'you just don't feel that you belong there, like you shouldn't be there really....it's as if they push you aside.'* While part of the week at school had improved considerably since Year 8 Eleanor was obviously still very aware of the control exercised by some students to exclude and constrain the learning of those of whom they did not approve.

Her attitude towards the organisation of Mathematics and the lessons which took place was very ambivalent and the reasons for this were twofold, but which Eleanor found difficult to disentangle. She appreciated the smaller group size with additional help and the fact that this enabled more attention to be given to individual students. However she did not like the subject itself and chose a small stone which she considered represented the subject perfectly as it was *'a very dark colour and very rough and not that interesting.'* Her perception of the Mathematics setting was also coloured by the fact that although *'I know and get on with some of the people in the group....it is the same for History really as some of my friends are in like a couple of groups higher up.'* There were also other students in the Mathematics group whose behaviour was not always satisfactory. For someone of Eleanor's rather quiet nature this made the emergent Mathematics settings not only unpredictable, but also uncomfortable and curtailed her participation. *'Some of the time you get these people that just shout out and all and you just feel all weird just sitting there.'*

The lesson which I observed in Year 9 was a continuation of the module on the impact of powered flight on the twentieth century. Mr. Tudor and a teaching assistant were already in the classroom. When the students entered Mr. Tudor said, *'Hallo, guys. How are you today? Come and settle down quickly so that we can get on with the lesson.'*

Fifteen students were present out of a possible twenty one. Eleanor sat at a table with one other girl and a boy. Unlike Year 8 Eleanor faced into the table and her engagement with other students was immediate, chatting with the other two students while waiting for the lesson to start. The table was adjacent to another table with two girls and four boys.

The students settled down quickly and Mr. Tudor spent ten minutes revising the work which they had done before half-term on the flights which had taken place at the beginning of the twentieth century and the importance of these, asking the students if they could remember the contribution of the Wright Brothers and Bleriot. When one boy answered that Bleriot had flown across the Atlantic, Mr. Tudor asked whether there could be any implications for flight across the Atlantic in war time. None of the students volunteered any answers and Mr. Tudor opened up practice to enable the engagement of the students by changing the question to *'what sort of people had been involved in fighting in the First World War?'* After some hesitation one boy said *'the men who were fighting.'* Mr. Tudor said *'yes, that's right and how would it be different now? Who would be involved now?'* A boy answered *'everybody.'* Mr. Tudor said *'exactly. Well done.'*

Mr. Tudor then asked the students to suggest a word beginning with 'c' which meant people who were not involved in actual fighting, but who could still be injured. One boy offered the word civilians and once again Mr. Tudor responded with *'well done.'* Eleanor did not offer any answers, but was fully engaged with the lesson and clearly participating giving full attention to the answers offered and the responses made by Mr. Tudor. A small group of two boys and three girls had disrupted the lesson several times by chatting and Mr. Tudor had asked them to pay attention. These interruptions had not had any noticeable effect on Eleanor who had remained focused on Mr. Tudor and what he was saying.

Mr. Tudor started the video which was about a Ministry of Information film on Air Raids and the preparation necessary to ensure the safety of the public. He stopped the video after 2 minutes and asked the class who they thought the film had been made for and for what purpose. One boy answered *'the people who lived back then and how to survive,'* and Mr. Tudor replied *'great, now let's watch some more of it.'* The video was started again and covered instructions about how to receive information, how to construct an Anderson shelter and an instruction on not listening to rumours or gossip. Mr. Tudor asked the class why they thought that the public were being told how to construct Anderson shelters and Eleanor volunteered the answer *'for protection.'* Mr. Tudor agreed with her and said *'well done.'* Unlike her reactions in Year 8, Eleanor's demeanour in this lesson indicated an awareness of the overall direction of the lesson and the way in which she could participate and therefore align herself with the joint practice. Her correct answer reinforced this and allowed her a sense of competence.

The video continued and covered areas such as not being tempted to 'panic buy,' clearing the loft of rubbish to minimise the risk of fire, having a bucket of sand or soil ready in case of incendiary bombs, always carrying a gas mask, keeping a pencil and paper near the wireless in order to copy down information, not making unnecessary phone calls, having identity labels for everybody and the necessity of evacuation for children. During this time Eleanor continued to concentrate on the video, not speaking to anyone else. Mr. Tudor stopped the video and said that he was *'going to ask certain students about what information has been given so far.'* He asked why the loft should be cleared, what was the point of gas masks and what was the point of evacuation? Eleanor raised her hand when the students who were targeted did not give the required answers, but Mr. Tudor did not ask her and undertook extensive scaffolding with each of the specific students he had questioned until they understood the reasons for the precautions. Although Eleanor was not asked for a contribution she remained attentive and listened to

the interaction between Mr. Tudor and the other students and, I argue, enabled her to engage with the discourse of the subject and extend her participation and, therefore her learning, by listening.

The remainder of the video was played which showed children being evacuated to the countryside, the importance of the 'blackout,' the implication of the siren, the importance of moving immediately to a shelter, the use of a football rattle by the air raid wardens or police to signal a gas attack, and an explanation of the sound which was known as the 'all clear.' The film drew to close with an extract from Nimrod from Elgar's Enigma Variations and Mr. Tudor laughed and said that this '*is stirring music to keep up the spirits of the public.*' A short extract followed detailing the 'forces of evil and tyranny' which Britain was 'battling' against. Throughout the whole of this section of video Eleanor was once again concentrating fully on the contents of the film.

Mr. Tudor then spent five minutes discussing the importance of the blackout and its effectiveness. He went to the window and drew the blinds but with the slats open and asked how effective this might be. He then closed the slats and once again asked whether this would be completely effective. There were still chinks of light coming through and the students commented that if there were a light on in the room it could be seen from outside. Mr. Tudor explained that despite all the precautions of the blackout many cities such as Coventry, Birmingham, London and Plymouth were heavily bombed at night.

Mr. Tudor asked the class to open their exercise books and to take a double page and on the left hand side to write a title of 'Things you should do in the event of an air raid' and on the right hand side to write the title 'Things you should not do in an air raid.' He also wrote the titles on the board and explained that he wanted the students to make a list

of the recommendations from the video and asked for an example for each list. One girl gave the example *'you should build a shelter'* and a boy gave the example *'you should not listen to rumours.'* Mr. Tudor asked the students to add four more recommendations to each list. All the students worked alone, including Eleanor who was writing quickly, pausing occasionally and then continuing to write. At no time did she appear not to know how to do the task set. This contrasted strongly with her intermittent participation in Year 8. The students worked for three minutes before Mr. Tudor said that there was one minute left for them to complete the task. During the final minute Mr. Tudor went over to one boy who was having difficulty completing the list of *'things you should do in the event of an air raid,'* and Mr. Tudor prompted him about the necessity of carrying a gas mask and a girl asked why it was important to have a pen and paper by the telephone or radio. Other than this there was complete silence in the classroom as the students worked.

At the end of the time Mr. Tudor asked for feedback from the students. Eleanor's hand was raised for the whole time that answers were being offered. Some of the students started to call out answers and Mr. Tudor reminded them that if they did that then no-one's answer could be heard. The bell rang signalling the end of the lesson and the beginning of lunch time and some of the students started to clear away. Mr. Tudor said, *'there you go, that is the siren, but it is a siren for me and I will finish the lesson when I am ready.'* The students stopped clearing away and remained still. Mr. Tudor continued to ask for more examples for the lists. Eleanor was asked twice and responded with, *'do not spend too much time on the telephone and do not listen to gossip or rumours.'* After another three minutes Mr. Tudor said, *'right, you have all done really well today. Now you can clear away and go.'* Eleanor packed up her books and went out of the classroom with the girl with whom she had been sitting.

Eleanor's demeanour was much more confident and her participation in the lesson generally had been much greater than had been the case in the lesson in Year 8 and this confirmed her perception of her participation voiced in the interview. I was not able to judge whether her participation in group work was in fact less than that in general class discussion as no opportunity was available for group work because of the nature of the tasks which were undertaken. She responded confidently and spoke clearly when answering questions. It was clear that Eleanor had moved significantly along her trajectory as a learner of History and was now locating herself in that particular community of schooled historians.

The second interview of Year 9 was in marked contrast to that of Year 8. When asked to read an extract from the text book Eleanor was very confident and read all of the text with little hesitation and no mistakes. She commented that she had been aware of an improvement in her reading and her work in school generally but could not identify the individual factors which had contributed to this change. She did however acknowledge that it seemed to be a circular process depending to a large extent to the improved relationships that she now enjoyed with more of her peers.

'I know I have changed, but I've noticed that for a long time now. I have got a feeling now because last time I wasn't so confident because of what people thought and now I'm feeling more relaxed with people and I'm getting more confident and I'm reading better and more confident.'

Her responses to the questions on the lesson were much faster than had been the case in Year 8 and little prompting was needed from me when I asked Eleanor questions about aspects of the Ministry of Information film. Her recall of the lesson was extensive and also of the instructions given by the film about precautions necessary in the event of air raids, with only one slight hesitation about the role of rationing saying *'if people bought*

too much food it might go off.' I then moved on to investigate whether she could hypothesis about the role of industrial centres and their vulnerability to air raids. This proved slightly more difficult for her to grasp, but when asked which city within 50 miles had been heavily bombed in the war she responded correctly. After some scaffolding she was able to explain that the city had been bombed because it had many factories and the docks.

We then discussed evacuation and which areas would be likely to be evacuated. Eleanor was very clear that the major industrialised areas would be the ones which would be likely to be evacuated, but found it difficult to hypothesis as to whether the town near to which the school was situated would have also been evacuated. On reflection I can now see that this might well have been an unfair question and relied on her being able to visualise the town sixty years before. Although it is not as developed currently as some major cities it has an industrial area which has only developed to any significant extent in the last thirty years. Her response was that she did not think that it was likely because the people who lived there were richer. I asked her to consider whether an enemy would be likely to bomb the town if she compared it to the other large city which had been subject to intense aerial bombardment and she answered that *'probably not because there are not so many large factories and such.'*

My observation of the lesson and her responses to the questions indicated that Eleanor had not only participated to a much greater extent than in the lesson observed in Year 8, but that as a result her ability to negotiate meanings using the reifications of the subject had been more extensive. I argue that it is possible that the understanding which she demonstrated of the lesson is attributable to her greater participation and also to the nature of the material, not only visually, but also in content, that of dealing with peoples' lives, which appeared to command the interest of the class generally much more than had

the first lesson which I observed, with its abstract concepts on the expansion of trade and industry in Year 8.

Mr. Tudor's general impression of Eleanor was more positive in Year 9 than it had been in Year 8 and he chose a stone to represent her which was light and smooth with no rough edges. He explained that he thought this suited Eleanor as '*she is a very nice, rounded, happy positive girl who I enjoy having in the classroom.*' This contrasted strongly with his perception of Eleanor in Year 8 as being '*heavy and ponderous.*' He commented that there was a noticeable difference in the way Eleanor acted in the classroom with a greater confidence in her own abilities and willingness to participate. This comment confirmed the assertion that he had made that Eleanor belonged to what he saw as the separate community of History learners in contrast to the other students in the group whom he considered to be detached from the joint practice. He placed the stone for Eleanor's liking of History in Year 9 in the third circle which corresponded with the way that Eleanor had viewed her liking. He repeated the reservation that he had voiced in the interview in Year 8 that he considered that Eleanor's liking of the subject depended somewhat on the nature of the topic studied. He suggested that if the material were something with a '*particularly strong human interest value,*' her attitude towards the subject would be more positive. This opinion was confirmed by Eleanor's interest and responses to the subject matter in the observed lesson.

Mr. Tudor suggested that Eleanor's understanding of the subject was dependent upon whether the topic were being studied in depth or breadth, giving as examples the difference between the depth study of the rise of Hitler and the Nazis and the breadth study which they were currently undertaking of the effect of powered flight on the twentieth century. He considered that her understanding of the study in depth would be greater and placed the stone representing this in the third circle, while for that

representing Eleanor's understanding of a breadth study as being in the fifth circle, and that her understanding was greater if more time were being spent on concentrating on one place and time in some detail. Mr. Tudor was therefore concerned about her ability to cope with the topic they had just started because it was thematic and was to span one hundred years.

He considered that her grasp of chronology was 'fairly weak,' but explained that, for this topic, he was going to put up a timeline of the twentieth century, detailing the technological developments concerned with flight so that she and the other students who also had this difficulty would '*have something to hook ideas to.*' He was thus using one of the strategies he had developed to open up concepts reifications by using the tools of the community, i.e. timelines. His comments mirrored the concerns that Eleanor had expressed about the modular system and he had obviously discerned the frustration which Eleanor experienced of having insufficient time to reflect on the concepts covered in the lessons and which she had articulated in the interview. Although Eleanor's reservations about Humanities in Year 9 had centred upon the fact that the students moved from discipline to discipline each term much of what underlay these reservations was the fact that, during the modules themselves, topics were being covered too quickly for her to fully negotiate the meanings inherent in the concepts covered and this limited her understanding of these.

Mr. Tudor considered that Eleanor would probably place her understanding in the fourth circle, because although he thought she was aware that her knowledge had improved since Year 8 and she could '*speak with some confidence and fluency on some issues and topics,*' there were still some areas on which she remained hesitant. These areas included such as the '*ability to hypothesise, to perceive the reliability and unreliability of sources, understand different interpretations and the fact that some conclusions in*

History are provisional.’ The responses that Eleanor had given in the interview after the lesson to factual questions and the contrast of these to the more hesitant responses when dealing with more abstract concepts confirmed Mr. Tudor’s analysis of the situation.

Mr. Tudor considered that he would place a stone representing Eleanor’s participation in class in the third circle. He suggested this because he thought that Eleanor participated willingly and well and that her *‘contributions are really good, some of the best in the group.’* He believed that this was due to a set of factors which included Eleanor’s improved reading and consequent increased confidence, but also to the fact of the nature and size of the Foundation group. This not only corresponded with the reasons that Eleanor had given in her interview for her increased participation but was also confirmed by my observations of her behaviour in the lesson. However, he believed that should Eleanor once again find herself in a completely mixed ability group of *‘twenty seven or twenty eight, many of whom would be very very able she would struggle to keep up the level of participation that she shows now.’* Once again his reflections confirmed the views that Eleanor had expressed about the situation in the mixed ability English lessons and her continued awareness of the appropriated power of some students to impede her participation in that group.

He placed a stone representing her participation in a smaller group situation on the border of circles two and three and this was because he considered that much of Eleanor’s participation depended not only on the subject being studied but also *‘which students are there at the time.’* He clarified this by explaining that in his opinion there were some *‘very immature youngsters in that group,’* and, as he had explained in an earlier interview, felt that the class had divided itself into a number of communities, some of whom appeared to share the goal of participating fully, while others resisted engagement.

He considered that the group with which Eleanor was now working displayed a sense of commitment to the lessons and the students were able to make *'connections and parallels and links to the learning that has gone on before and are able to see the big picture.'*

This commitment and understanding he contrasted to the plight of the students in what he saw as the other communities and who were quite often absent from school. These students, he considered, remained largely detached from the activities in the lessons and *'each lesson, whether it is good or bad is an individual experience and stands alone, rather than being part of the whole.'* He regretted that he was not succeeding in *'getting across to them or finding a way to help them make the connections.'*

The group with which Eleanor worked was one in which he believed she could *'really hold her own and whose views are respected within that group.'* He considered that Eleanor had been *'a force for good'* within the group and had a *'positive influence on one of the other students.'* He contrasted this improvement with the possibility of Eleanor working with one of the other groups some of whose students he felt he was failing and who were not as *'thoughtful and reflective as Eleanor,'* and tended not to *'slow down and reflect, but just jump in and make a preliminary comment.'* In this situation he considered that Eleanor would not participate to such a large extent.

The differences between the groups had been marked in the lesson which I had observed. There appeared to be a very clear distinction between the considered responses to the questions which Mr. Tudor posed from a group of eight students, of whom Eleanor was one and the responses of the rest of the class. Mr. Tudor said that because he believed that students learn most effectively from each other he would often ask one of this group if they understood the details of the lesson being covered and then to explain it to the class. He considered that Eleanor was particularly good at doing this and as a result was now in a leadership position and was a student who the other students within that group

'looked to.' He was convinced that at least one other student within the smaller group had been affected positively by Eleanor's attitude and was responding more in class.

While there were still areas of History, such as those articulated by Mr. Tudor with which Eleanor would still have difficulty there had been a significant and dramatic improvement in her participation and therefore her learning in the community of schooled historians. I argue that the improvement in Eleanor's participation and therefore her learning and positive transformation of identity was due to several factors. The composition of the Foundation group and, particularly the small group with whom Eleanor worked most consistently, meant that she was no longer with students who would not legitimate her participation or allow her access to the joint enterprise of History and therefore there had been a significant move along her learning trajectory in History. Her participation had changed from being marginal or non-legitimated participation to a more proximal position. Her reading had improved and, with this came the confidence to attempt the more difficult texts which she encountered, thereby giving her a sense of belonging due to her increased competence in this area and the respect that she was accorded by some of the other students in the History community.

The relationships which she had made in the church had been cemented and the sense of belonging which she enjoyed there had stopped being just mediation to the unsatisfactory experiences which she suffered in Year 8. These relationships together with those made in the extended friendship group and her role within these two had contributed to her sense of identity. As Wenger (1998) argues,

'An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we encounter our effects upon the world and develop out relations with others, these layers build upon

each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections'

(p.151).

These relationships and the construction of her identity supported her new found agency in the classroom. This agency had enabled her to adopt a more prominent role with her peers in the History classroom and to act in a supportive role to at least one other student.

CHAPTER 7

‘I would rather be doing things at home -The Story of Mathilda

Mathilda was one of two sisters who lived with their brother and parents on a large farm approximately one and half miles from Cullishaven School. Mathilda was on Stage 5 of the School’s Special Educational Needs Register and was classified as having ‘specific learning difficulties – dyslexia.’ This classification entitled her to additional help in the classroom and contrasted with those labels attributed to Eleanor, Henry and William who were all classified as being on Stage 3. She had achieved a level 3 in her Standardised Assessment Test and, in the Cognitive Ability Tests in Year 7 she had registered 75% on Verbal Reasoning, 94% on Non Verbal Reasoning and an overall Triple Score of 85%. This score placed Mathilda as being of what was considered to be ‘average ability,’ a classification which ranges from 85 to 115.

When Mathilda attended the first interview of Year 8 she appeared positive and confident and was interested in the research and very willing to participate. She chose what she considered was a ‘*rusty reddish stone*’ to represent her as she explained ‘*I don’t think that I am a very quiet person . This stone is the brightest colour here and I think that I’m quite bubbly.*’ She said that she did not participate in any school organised activities either at lunchtimes or after school. This was because at lunchtimes she preferred to chat to her friends who were not in her tutor group and after school she did not wish to spend her ‘*own time*’ on school activities.

Her main hobbies centred around caring for her two horses, which were stabled at the farm and riding, show jumping and hunting with them. It was clear that schoolwork was relegated to the lowest priority in Mathilda’s life as she explained that ‘*when I get home I go and do my horse, ride him properly and then come in and watch a bit of t.v. and then do my homework.*’ Because of her difficulties with literacy, homework in which there

was a large amount of reading and writing presented a considerable problem for Mathilda, especially, *'English, R.E. and things like that...stuff that I have to write...that's what really stops me from doing it. I find that very difficult and I'm not very quick or anything.'* It is not clear from this statement whether Mathilda was referring to her reading and writing or what she considered to be her ability generally.

The learning connected with History made available to Mathilda outside school from either books or television was negligible, from Mathilda's own choice. She explained that although she watched up to four hours of television per night during the week during the winter and autumn months this viewing was concentrated mainly on soap operas such as EastEnders and Cold Feet, the latter being broadcast from half past nine until half past ten in the evening. This meant that homework which took between one hour and one hour and a half was done after this time and Mathilda's bedtime was often very late. She explained that during the summer months she watched television much less because she preferred to be *'doing more things outside.'* She did not watch any programmes connected with History because, as she explained, *'I really don't find them interesting.'*

Her reading was limited due to the nature of the problems she experienced with literacy. Although, like all students at Cullishaven School, she was issued with a library ticket she *'hardly ever used it,'* and did not own a ticket for the public library. Because she preferred to be involved with activities outside she was immune to any recommendations from friends or teaching staff about possible books which she might enjoy, and saw reading as a distraction from more enjoyable pursuits. She commented,

'I don't find anything interesting. I wouldn't sit there with a book like other people sit with a book. I live in an area where I can do a lot of things and there's no point in me going to sit down and read when I can go out and do something else.'

She went to the cinema occasionally and enjoyed comedy films about teenagers. She had watched Titanic on a video, but was not particularly enthusiastic about the film.

Unsurprisingly, given the difficulties which Mathilda experienced with literacy and her preference for working outside, her favourite subject was Physical Education and she chose a small green stone to represent the subject because she considered green to be a 'cool' colour. She was very interested in the subject and enjoyed it very much indeed, because there was no '*written work*,' placing the stone in the first circle to represent her liking of the subject. She also considered that she understood '*most of what goes on in the lessons*,' and was able to '*do things quite well*,' thereby assuming an identity of competence in the subject and displaying a confidence which had not been evidenced in the initial interviews which I had undertaken with the other students. She placed the stone once again in the first circle to represent this.

The subject which Mathilda disliked most was Geography and she picked a stone which she considered was '*boring and Geography is like boring*.' She placed the stone in the seventh circle and said that this not only represented her liking of the subject but also her understanding. She admitted that because she did not particularly like the subject she did not '*really listen as much*' as she should and acknowledged that this deficit in her participation contributed to her diminished understanding of the subject. She suspected, however, that the Geography teacher would probably consider that she understood more and placed the stone representing the teacher's view of her understanding in the fifth circle. Her own behaviour and body language was, she considered, responsible for this enhanced view, explaining, '*I act like I do understand it in a way and I think that she thinks I understand because of that*.' Like Eleanor, Mathilda appeared to consider that the teacher based any assessment of understanding on behaviour and discounted or ignored written evidence.

Mathilda chose a multicoloured stone to represent History because she said, *'sometimes I find History quite interesting and sometimes I find it quite boring and this stone looks quite interesting, but ...like you could look at it a lot and then you would think...it's not that interesting.'* She placed the stone on the borderline of the fourth and fifth circles, not only to represent her liking for the subject, but also for her understanding. She considered that Mr. Tudor would also place the stone in that position for his perception of her understanding, as she said that he would explain concepts to her *'to make sure that I definitely understand it properly.'* Her relationship with the text in History was understandably mixed. She acknowledged that she found some of the text very hard and her first point of reference would be one of her friends who *'always helps'* for assistance. She considered that some of the textbooks in History were more accessible and were well illustrated and which *'shows it all'* and therefore helped with deciphering the purpose of the material. Mathilda, however, was dismissive of some of the tasks which were set in the books and queried their purpose, saying, *'sometimes you think, well what's the point in doing all of this, why can't you just read it out and then jot down the bits that you think are important?'* This comment indicated a confidence, perhaps misplaced, in the expertise of students to identify the salient points, or the expectation that the teacher would instigate further discussion to clarify these.

As the interview progressed it became very obvious that Mathilda considered school as an interruption to her greatest priority, that of spending time grooming and riding her horses and that the most important factor about attending school was meeting her friends and enjoying time with them. She agreed that she would probably *'need some of the things we do at school, but I just don't enjoy coming to school when I would rather be doing things at home...like I would rather be out hunting today.'* There had been an opportunity to participate in a hunt meeting on that day and it was clear that Mathilda had resented being forced to attend school, although this was not reflected in her attitude in

the interview. To Mathilda there seemed little at school which would be either relevant or particularly necessary to further any career ambitions and she explained that her future was secure because, *‘I’ve already got some people that want me to go and work for them.’* She felt that her outside interests provided opportunities for greater social engagement than did those of school and the activities in which she participated not only endowed her with an identity of competence which was absent in many lessons at school, but provided access to expertise which would pave the way for her future career. The activities also threw into question the validity for her of those which she undertook at school. As she explained,

‘I like to get out hunting because I meet more people in that way and I see how to work with hounds and things like that which I think is much more interesting than some of the school work that they teach.’

Oakley et al. (2002) argue that in any school there are a proportion of students who are RHINOs (really here in name only) who *‘because they do not disrupt lessons in an overt way or break the school’s basic conventions their disaffection is not immediately apparent’* (Oakley et al., 2002, p.193). As the interview progressed it became clear that Mathilda could be numbered amongst a group such as these.

Mathilda considered that participation was *‘joining in’* and that the attitude and practice of the teacher together with the amount that she *‘knew about a subject’* affected her willingness to participate in class discussions. She explained that if she were unsure of the facts in a lesson she would *‘just sit and listen to what people’s opinions were.’* She considered that her participation in class discussions in History lessons was quite high and placed the stone representing this on the borders of the second and third circles, and explained that this was largely due to Mr. Tudor’s teaching approach. It was clear that she appreciated the fact that he moderated his practice for those students who experienced difficulties in this class, offering alternative forms of participation and

extending access to learning as much as he did for those in the other classes and did not *'teach writing all the time, but is lively and like explains it to you much more.'* This encouraged her to greater participation which she admitted she would not have done had the teacher been *'grumpy and just sat there.'* This opinion corresponds with the findings of Oakley et al. (2002) which argues that RHINOs respond most positively to those teachers whose practice is student centred.

Mathilda considered that her participation in group discussions and work in History lessons was slightly higher than that for class discussions and she placed the stone on the border of the first and second circles. She stated that she enjoyed voicing her opinions in a small group of her friends because *'you get to discuss all the reasons together'* and felt that she remembered more from a lesson in which she had worked in a small group of friends because she could remember her friends' voices, *'saying all the things.'* She valued her friendships a great deal and considered that her friends understood her generally more than other people, although she said that she *'got on with my Mum well,'* and that her mother would help her with schoolwork if necessary.

Mathilda made some interesting observations about the conduct of the students in the mixed ability tutor group in History. She considered that while there were some students who were very good at the subject these students would not necessarily constantly volunteer their own opinions, but would *'sit back and listen and let other people say what they want.'* She contrasted this behaviour with that of those students who were considered 'keens' and who were not popular with the rest of the class because of their demanding behaviour and eagerness to display their knowledge. These students persistently attempted to *'tell everybody what they know when Sir is trying to explain and stuff.'*

Mathilda explained to me that, as in History, the students were not put into ‘ability groups’ for English, but were all mixed up. Her attitude towards mixed ability grouping was very positive due to the presence of her friends. These friends were very supportive and enabled Mathilda to engage in the joint practices of English. She considered, however, that there was some difficulty with this organisation because there were ‘*some really clever people, some in the middle and there’s some like not clever who don’t quite get it at all.*’ She said that although she experienced severe difficulties with literacy she would place herself as being in the middle of the English group. It would appear from this that the support of Mathilda’s friends mediated the setting and offered a partial identity of competence to her in a subject in which there were many obstacles for her to overcome.

Her attitude towards the Mathematics lessons, which were strictly setted by ability, was moderated very strongly by the presence or absence of one particular member of staff. Mathilda explained that on Mondays and Fridays there was an additional teacher in the lessons who spent most of the time working with Mathilda. This was a distinct advantage for Mathilda because the member of staff explained ‘*things really, really well*’ to her but in a way which Mathilda considered was especially superior to the way in which other members of staff worked. Additionally, Mathilda believed that there was a reciprocity in the relationship because, not only did the teacher explain the work so that Mathilda understood it, but was patient and as Mathilda explained, ‘*she really understands what I mean.*’ It was clear that by her practice this particular teacher was at pains to provide dialogic teaching and open up practice. Unfortunately, due to the funding distribution at arena level, there was insufficient provision for this situation to be repeated on the other days of the week and on these days Mathilda found participating in the process of reification much more difficult and to understand the concepts covered in the lessons. She stated that ‘*when I don’t understand it, it has just gone past meI take*

in like a bit of it and then the rest of it just goes over my head.' Mathilda explained that whatever the organisation of the subjects the important factor for her personally was that the teacher was approachable and had enough time to explain any problems clearly, thus enabling her to participate more fully and negotiate meaning with the material.

The lesson in which I observed Mathilda in Year 8 was the same as that for Henry. Mathilda was seated at a set of tables with four other girls to the left of the Mr. Tudor's desk. During Mr. Tudor's explanation of the nature of the study unit and the learning objective for the lesson Mathilda concentrated totally on Mr. Tudor and started writing the headings immediately he had requested the students to do so, appearing not to have any problem with copying the headings from the board. She continued to write after Mr. Tudor had asked them to stop and instructed them to watch the video. Mathilda continued to write for a minute after the video had started and then her attention was focused on the television for the length of the video.

Mr. Tudor asked the class to turn to the textbook and the comparisons of Manchester in 1750 with the same city in 1850 and to discuss the differences with the person next to them and then the rest of the table. Mathilda spoke for a short time with the girl sitting next to her using the sources and then turned to the other students spending the next two minutes discussing the sources and differences generally and making an active contribution to the group discussion.

Mr. Tudor then asked the class to draw a table detailing the aspects of Manchester in 1750 on the left hand side of the table and Manchester in 1850 on the right hand side of the table. He explained that he required the students to *'put down words and phrases to describe the two pictures,'* and gave them four minutes in which to complete the task. After two minutes Mr. Tudor reminded them that they had four minutes in total and that

two minutes of this time had elapsed and that if some of the students had not yet written anything down they should just *'jot down some words now.'* Mathilda worked continuously during the four minutes and spoke to no-one at the table. The remainder of the class also worked silently.

After four minutes Mr. Tudor said *'right, finish now, pens down, feedback please.'* He explained that he was going to ask specific tables for answers and chose the table at which Henry was sitting to suggest words or phrases to describe Manchester in 1750. The boys at the table gave various answers, during which time the rest of the class remained silent and Mr. Tudor wrote their answers on the board. Mr. Tudor then said to the boys at the table, *'well done, give yourselves a round of applause.'* He then asked the class, *'can you give me a word which means to do with the countryside and begins with the letter 'r' and which best describes Manchester at this time?'* Mathilda did not volunteer an answer and a boy suggested the word 'rural.'

He then turned to the table at which Mathilda was sitting and said, *'Mathilda your table is... ..'* Mathilda seemed reluctant to participate and looked down at the table. Mr. Tudor said again, *'Mathilda'* at which Mathilda looked up again and focused on Mr. Tudor. He continued,

'your table is the next to give some answers and this is about Manchester in 1850. Your group will have to do well because the boys did so well. What are you going to say about Manchester in 1850?'

One of the girls at the table said *'there were more people and it was densely crowded.'* Mr. Tudor asked Mathilda if she understood what the words 'densely crowded' meant and Mathilda replied *'packed together.'* He then wrote the suggestions on the board. At this point the boys at Henry's table started to talk and Mr. Tudor stopped the girls at Mathilda's table from volunteering answers and said to the group of boys, *'the girls*

listened with the utmost courtesy to your contributions. Please return the favour.' The boys sat quietly and Mr. Tudor returned his attention to the girls at the table. One of the girls volunteered the word '*ugly*.' Mathilda raised her hand, but Mr. Tudor turned to another girl who said '*no wildlife*.' Mr. Tudor then acknowledged Mathilda who volunteered '*built up*.' Other girls at the table suggested '*factories, chimneys and pollution*.' To all of these contributions Mr. Tudor made comments such as '*yes, well done, good answer*,' while continuing to write the suggested words and phrases including those of Mathilda on the board.

Mr. Tudor then widened the discussion to the rest of the class before drawing their attention to the pack of primary resources which he had distributed to each table. He explained the role of the primary sources and the task which the students were expected to undertake, that of drawing a timeline from 1750 to 1900 and writing the letter of each source either closer to 1750 or 1900, depending on whether they thought it represented events pre or post industrialisation and to discuss it with the other students at the table. He then gave an example on the board. Mathilda picked up a source and discussed it with the girl sitting next to her and then with the rest of the group and then wrote it down on her timeline. This continued for the rest of the exercise and at no time was Mathilda not working on the task in hand and appeared to be keeping up with the work. She was engaged and participated fully in the discussions at the table and her demeanour indicated interest.

At the end of four minutes Mr. Tudor said to the class, '*stop there, hold it, feedback time. Can anyone give me a source which is pre-industrial Britain?*' Mathilda did not raise her hand but a girl at the table suggested a source showing a woman at a spinning wheel in a cottage. Mr. Tudor said, '*yes great. Now is there one which compares with this?*' A boy suggested a source which illustrated a factory filled with machines, and Mr. Tudor

remarked, *'yes, well done. Now which are the sources which you would consider post industrial Britain?'* Mathilda searched through the sources, but did not respond with an answer. Other students volunteered answers such as a railway station or an iron bridge. Mr. Tudor then asked the students whether there were any sources which were particularly hard to place. Mathilda raised her hand, but at that moment the buzzer sounded signalling the end of the lesson. Some of the students started to clear away, but Mr. Tudor said, *'do not clear away. I want to draw the learning to a close. Let's have one answer from each table to describe either pre or post industrial Britain and then we can clear away.'* Several students raised their hand including Mathilda, but she was not required to answer. After five students had answered Mr. Tudor said, *'okay, you've all done well today. Clear your exercise books away. I will clear up the textbooks and the sources. Thank you.'* Mathilda cleared away her belongings and went out of the classroom talking to the girl who had sat next to her in the lesson.

Mathilda's participation in the lesson confirmed the assertion that she had made in the interview that her participation in small group work was more active than in class discussions. It was clear from the interaction which took place in the small group that Mathilda was a respected member whose contributions were acknowledged, valued and accepted. She had been engaged totally with the lesson and Mr. Tudor had offered alternative forms of participation. These had included activities such as the timeline which did not require extensive writing, thus enabling greater access to learning for all students, but particularly for those who struggled with abstract concepts in discussion without scaffolding, using tools such as this which provide visual display of an abstract concept such as chronology. However Mathilda's responses in the interview suggested that, although she was able and willing to demonstrate participation in the joint activities of the small group situation and to a lesser extent in the wider classroom discussions,

from choice she neither experienced nor was interested in fostering alignment with the broader enterprise of the practice of History.

I interviewed Mathilda for the second time in Year 8 on the day after I had observed the above lesson. I asked her if she could remember the century in which the picture of pre-industrial Manchester had been set. Although she said that she remembered that it had been in 1750 she was unable to place this as being in the eighteenth century. When asked to read a secondary source written in 1986 from the textbook used in the lesson, her reading was very slow and although she was able to read the three syllable word 'factories' she was very hesitant about articulating the words 'diseases' and 'similar' and needed great help with the word 'ventilation.' She correctly identified the text as being secondary source, but considered that the writer had written it in the eighteenth century, *'but then it was found out by somebody else and they wrote it out as what he said.'* This indicated that Mathilda understood that the text, written in 1986, was indeed a secondary source, but had not recognised the reason for this i.e. that it was a commentary from the twentieth century written about events in the eighteenth century.

She was very confident about discussing the differences between rural and urban Manchester.

'It was countryside and very open fields and animals surrounded by fields in 1750 and in 1900, or whatever, it was very covered in smoky chimneys and factories and everything, houses, no countryside.'

She was however unable to remember the word 'rural.' I asked her to describe some of the words that were used the day before or that she would use to describe Manchester in 1750 and she responded with that the words used were *'countryside, open and relaxing and calmest words.'* She recalled correctly that the words to describe Manchester in 1850 were *'very busy, smoky and not very nice, ugly.'*

We then looked at the set of primary source pictures which had been used in the lesson and discussed the picture of the woman at the spinning wheel in the cottage. Mathilda decided that this picture could be placed nearer to 1750 because in the other picture the workers were *'in factories working and sewing things.'* I asked Mathilda what she associated with the word 'industry' and she responded that it was to do with *'work and working people who go out every day to work.'* Mr. Tudor had not covered the subject of transport in the lesson of the previous day and I used the sources to investigate whether Mathilda could see connections between transport and its role in the development of industrial Britain. She said that there was definitely a need for transport to *'get the goods to other places.'* I agreed and asked her to identify some of the sources which were concerned with transport. She did this easily and correctly placed them either as being nearer to 1750 or 1900.

Mathilda appeared very confident about answering these questions and, exploiting this, I decided to investigate whether she was able to hypothesise as to the reasons that Manchester was chosen as an illustration of industrialisation. Without any prompting on my part she volunteered the information that it had been chosen as an example because *'it's changed so much, so it's not just like a little change, it's a totally different place.'* She was able, after some thought to remember the word 'transform,' and I then asked her whether she considered that all of England had been transformed as much as Manchester. She gave this careful thought and answered that some places probably were whereas others were not. This depended on whether the areas were *'confined or not. I mean there's no point in building factories in a very small area when there are larger areas to build them in.'* This was a difficult task for someone in Mathilda's position whose access to History was limited and it was clear in her response that she was trying hard to make sense of the past using some of the information which she had negotiated the

previous day. It is also possible that had the question been asked later in the course she would have been able to give a more comprehensive answer.

I then extended the questioning by considering two maps, one which detailed the main centres of population in 1750 and the other concentrating on the centres of population in 1900. I asked her whether she understood what the term 'area of population' meant and she correctly identified it as being where '*lots of people lived.*' We considered the growth of population in areas such as London, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow and I asked Mathilda why she thought areas such as these developed. She explained that,

'They got bigger as the years went on and there were more people who needed more jobs and they built more factories and things and houses for them to live in.'

It was clear from this response that Mathilda was beginning to grasp at a basic level the interconnectedness of the social and industrial events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and I suggest that given more time and scaffolding would have been able to identify the cyclical nature of their development. I questioned Mathilda as to whether she thought that the county in which she lived would have developed in the same way and she considered that some areas might have done while others would have stayed the same. She was unable to identify any natural resources which had contributed to the income of the county in the past.

On the evidence from the interview and observation of the lesson I suggest that Mathilda's supportive relationships with her peers and the sense of belonging which she enjoyed with them, together with the practice of the History teacher, compensated somewhat for the difficulties with literacy she no doubt experienced in the History lessons. She had appropriated an identity of competence from her activities and relationships with her peers and adults in the riding community and this had been brought

into the arena of school to moderate certain settings such as those which involved small group activity, but insufficient for those in whole class interaction. Unlike Henry, Mathilda did not take the label of having special educational needs, which she had been attributed, to mean that she lacked ability and did not seem blame herself for any difficulties which she experienced. Her lack of interest in History, however, reduced her access to the subject both inside and outside school and therefore affected her learning and understanding.

When I discussed Mathilda with Mr. Tudor he chose a stone to represent her which he considered was a solid stone and thought that this described Mathilda as she was '*a solid girl with no frills, what you see is what you get.*' He said that he considered that this was a complementary description of Mathilda as he saw her as being '*a diamond, pure carbon. She is a child who tries her best. She has significant difficulties and never gives up.*' He believed that Mathilda also saw herself as having no frills and illustrated this with an incident in which he had been leading a class discussion on coal mining in the eighteenth century. He had been explaining that when a coal miner was looking for wife he was likely to choose a woman who would be able to work hard as a hurrier underground and therefore contribute more to the family budget. In this instance he was less likely to choose a dainty feminine girl than a 'big strapping lass.' Mr. Tudor was surprised to hear Mathilda comment '*oh like me then.*' He explained that he had refuted this and said '*not at all*' to Mathilda. Mathilda's perception of herself as being a 'big strapping lass' did not accord with reality as her physical stature was the same as many of the other girls in the year and normal for her age, but may reflect her acceptance of the 'perfect' body images projected by the media

Mr. Tudor believed correctly that Mathilda did not actively dislike the subject of History, but that she probably enjoyed other subjects '*where she could succeed*' such as Physical

Education much more and placed the stone representing his view of her liking of the subject on the border of the third and fourth circles. This perception was slightly higher than had been Mathilda's choice which had been on the border of the fourth and fifth circles. He confirmed that Mathilda was always cheerful and that he considered that they '*got on well together*,' this comment resonating with the positive comments that Mathilda had made about Mr. Tudor.

Mr. Tudor considered that Mathilda '*really struggles to understand*' and had difficulties with vague or abstract concepts, but was much happier and more able to cope with more concrete ideas. I suggest that Mr. Tudor's comment was correct given the pressure of the History curriculum to cover large amounts of material and the pace of lessons needed to achieve this. However, I argue that the discussions I had with Mathilda after the lesson indicated that more time given to individual scaffolding, a luxury not afforded to most teachers, would in fact have opened up practice for her and enabled her to grapple with more abstract ideas.

Mr. Tudor said he was heartened by the fact that although Mathilda was aware of her difficulties she was willing to come into each lesson with a positive attitude. He suspected that she would cope better now that the topic of the Making of the United Kingdom, which was complex, had been completed and they had moved on to the development of trade and industry which involved more straightforward ideas. He placed his perception of her understanding in the fifth circle which he acknowledged signified quite a low appreciation of the concepts, and conceded that he felt '*quite mean about doing this*.' This perception was slightly lower than Mathilda had considered Mr. Tudor's perception of her understanding, as she had placed the stone once again on the border of the fourth and fifth circles, and once again reflects Mathilda's mistaken perception that assessment was based solely on participation in classroom settings and

not written evidence. It would seem that if Mr. Tudor were indeed assessing Mathilda's understanding solely on written evidence, then, given her responses in the interview after the lesson, he was underestimating her understanding.

Mr. Tudor was also concerned about what he saw as Mathilda's lack of ability to retain the information which had been covered in each lesson, not only in Humanities, and believed that too much was demanded of students generally. He considered that for students such as Mathilda *'just coping with the day at school is a real scramble, a situation which is exacerbated by having to process it all again when they get home to do the homework.'* This reservation coincided with the concerns raised by the SENCO about the demands placed upon many students, but especially those who experienced difficulties. Mr. Tudor was also of the opinion that Mathilda did *'desperately want to do well with schoolwork.'* Although I had perceived Mathilda as being a pleasant and willing student, Mr. Tudor's perception did not accord with the one I had received from Mathilda who seemed to see school generally and homework in particular as interruptions to those activities in which she found much greater enjoyment. While she endured the necessity of attending school, I discerned that she was much more resistant to undertaking those tasks such as homework which encroached on what she considered as her *'own time.'*

Mr. Tudor was very concerned by what he saw as Mathilda's lack of confidence which he considered affected not only her perception of her own understanding but also of her participation in general class discussions. He considered that Mathilda would see her own understanding as being on the border of the fifth and sixth circle, lower than he actually viewed it. This was also lower than Mathilda's own choice of the border of the fourth and fifth circles although I did not reveal this to Mr. Tudor. He attributed what

he considered as Mathilda's possible low perception of her understanding to diffidence and the need for extensive reassurance. He explained that,

'sometimes I will go and talk to her and she knows the answer, but she needs such a lot of reassurance. She will quite often say "is this any good, Sir?" and the way that she is saying it is that she is building into it a subtext of "it is not any good is it?"'

While Mr. Tudor was at pains to reassure Mathilda that her work contained some interesting and worthwhile details he suspected that she did not entirely believe his sincerity and that he was *'just saying that to be nice to her.'*

Mr. Tudor also suggested that the lack of confidence which he perceived in Mathilda also contributed strongly to a reticence to engage fully in class discussions. I argue that Mathilda's confidence, which emerged so strongly in the interview was, in fact, context dependent and that Mr. Tudor rarely, if ever, saw her in situations in which this confidence could be displayed. The composition of the group with *'some very very bright youngsters'* also militated, Mr. Tudor believed, against Mathilda's more central participation. Mr. Tudor explained that some of the other students contributed extensively to the class discussions with some very profound answers and, although they did not mean to dominate the lessons, they gave their answers with authority thus possibly deterring students such as Mathilda with difficulties with literacy and associated low confidence from participating more fully. He described it thus.

'If I were surrounded by people who were really very bright and I thought, "crikey every time I put my hand up it might be wrong or it is not going to sound like their answer" it would probably hold me back.'

Mr. Tudor was convinced that Mathilda would benefit from being placed in the Foundation group for Year 9 and when with other students who also experienced difficulties would not feel so overawed and would be willing to participate more and

volunteer answers without waiting to be completely sure that her suggestions were right. He also correctly perceived that Mathilda's participation in small group work was higher because she was with friends who were supportive to her and in this context she would be more confident to express her views. He placed a stone to represent her group participation in the third circle. This was close to Mathilda's own perception of her group participation being placed on the border of the second and third circles.

It was clear that Mr. Tudor was a reflective practitioner who was at pains to offer whatever means of participation were necessary to enable students to engage in the practice of History and it was equally clear that his practice was appreciated by Mathilda, although her first recourse for help was still to her friends. However, the inevitable reificative demands of the subject and requirements for written evidence of understanding remained a hurdle for Mathilda and this, together with her preoccupation with her outside interests, meant that her movement along the learning trajectory in History was constantly impeded.

When I interviewed Mathilda in Year 9 she was again positive, lively and keen to participate in the research. Although Mathilda herself did not reveal the fact to me I had learned from another source that in the intervening year her parents' marriage had broken up and Mathilda was still living at home on the farm with her mother, sister and brother and that the relationship with her father was strained. As in Year 8, Mathilda did not participate in any activities organised by school either at lunchtimes or after school, because as she explained, *'I like being with my friends.'*

The time that she spent on her homework had decreased from Year 8 and now she estimated that she spent half an hour or less completing it. She watched television for up to three hours per night during the week and up to two hours at weekends, because the

weekend gave greater opportunities to spend time with her horses, which continued to be her main interest and hobby. During the summer she would attend horse shows and in the winter on Saturdays she went hunting and admitted that she would take *'the odd day off school to go hunting.'* Her television viewing was still centred upon the soap operas and she did not watch any programmes which were concerned with History as she commented, *'I don't find it interesting and it doesn't grab my attention.'* While Mathilda still had the ticket for the school library she *'hardly ever used it,'* and did not read any other books either fiction or non-fiction. She had, however, started to read the local paper and Horse and Hound magazine. Her visits to the cinema were still infrequent, but when she did go she generally enjoyed comedies, but had seen the film Gladiator set in the Roman period and had enjoyed it.

The stone that she chose to represent herself was a multi-coloured stone which had predominantly reddish colours on it and she had chosen this because she considered that she was *'not very quiet and it's almost got loud colours on it and I'm not a quiet person.'* Mathilda's favourite subject continued to be Physical Education because the subject involved *'no reading or writing and there is jogging outside or running around getting fresh air.'*

Mathilda's attitude towards History had become much more negative in Year 9 and this was due to a combination of factors which were interwoven and difficult to separate. She chose what she considered was a *'small plain boring stone,'* indicating not only her perception of the lesson itself, but also its importance in her school life. Although she placed the stone in the fourth circle to represent not only her liking of the subject but also her understanding of it she explained that this had been done because sometimes she liked it a bit depending on the teacher. Mathilda had been taught by both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart in Year 9.

Mathilda considered that her attitude towards History had changed initially because she had only been taught by Mr. Tudor for one term in Year 9 and then moved on to Mr. Stuart. Mr. Tudor was, she believed, '*one of the best teachers for helping*' and was '*always talking and trying to get you to understand.*' His attitude towards the students was friendly and the students could '*have a laugh and a joke.*' This was, she considered, very important and affected not only the way in which students viewed the subject, but also how well they understood it. She also commented that Mr. Tudor was more likely to allow the students to voice their own opinions without '*almost making you believe*' what he wanted.

She considered that Mr. Stuart was '*more strict*' than Mr. Tudor and that she felt less relaxed in his lessons. She was at pains to point out that although she had felt relaxed in Mr. Tudor's lessons she was '*relaxed but concentrating*' and that she enjoyed his teaching '*a lot more than Mr. Stuart's.*' She emphasised that for all lessons it was important for the students to have fun which they did in lessons taught by Mr. Tudor who often '*danced around and did different things.*' This variety encouraged the students to enjoy lessons and concentrate more with the result that when students left settings such as this with the view that '*that was alright and you don't mind going to it again. But if it is not like that then you come out thinking that was boring.*' The subject matter for the History syllabus in Year 9 was set but what it came to mean in the lives of the students depended very much on the participation which was made available to them (Wenger 1998) and it was clear that this differed greatly between classes.

Mathilda was disappointed that more writing was involved in Mr. Stuart's lessons than had been the case in those of Mr. Tudor and she thought that had there been less there was a possibility that her enjoyment of the subject may have been greater. Once again the issue of the pace of the lesson was raised and the amount of material which the

students were required to cover. Mathilda explained that she had difficulty in writing unless the class were given sufficient time to complete the work and that if some students had finished the task and there was a discussion about the work she found it *'very difficult to do both things at once.'*

Mathilda disapproved strongly of the Foundation group organisation of the Humanities lessons and placed the stone representing her liking of the organisation at the furthest edge of the seventh circle. She resented the fact that, by placing some of the students in what she considered *'the bottom set,'* there was an implied assumption by the teachers that those students were not capable of sustained or extended work and this assumption led to a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the students would not bother to work. She explained,

'I think they're like saying, they're putting me down almost. I think they put you down into a bottom set so they're thinking you can't do very much andyou think.... well, seeing as they've put us down here then we... ..'

and here she shrugged her shoulders suggesting *'why should we bother?'* Although Mathilda acknowledged that the smaller class size meant that there was the possibility of greater teacher assistance she did not consider that this made very much difference. Mathilda recognised the need to connect with others who had the knowledge and expertise which she needed and was convinced that mixed ability settings were more advantageous to students' understanding as she considered that *'if you're around people that understand, in your class, it's much more easier than being with people that don't understand.'*

Mathilda's perception of the Humanities organisation was very strongly influenced by the composition of the Foundation group. The fact that there were only three girls, one of whom was *'never there,'* and twenty one boys irritated her a great deal. Although she

liked some of the boys and thought that the opinions that they voiced were *'very good,'* which helped other people, the majority of the other boys were *'very silly.'* The attitude of these boys was manifest in behaviour which Mathilda considered to be immature and she complained that it was almost as if *'you've been put into a group with younger people...the way they act.'* The behaviour that Mathilda objected to most strongly was when the boys called out and behaved in a *'silly way around their friends.'* She also complained that she found it difficult to even speak to those boys and that being in the lesson with them caused her to *'get more wound up.'* The boys cited by Mathilda were disrupting her learning and possibly that of others, although they may not have been aware of the results of their behaviour or of the fact that they were exercising power in a negative way.

For Mathilda who often found it difficult to cope with the texts and the literary requirements of Humanities lessons further unnecessary noise proved a serious obstacle. She explained that *'when you're trying to write and everyone's like trying to shout out...and your trying to concentrate...I hear every distraction.'* Mathilda voiced the opinion that if there were a greater gender balance in the group the behaviour of the boys would improve. She based this suggestion on the comparison of the Humanities Foundation group with that of her English group where there was a more balanced boy/girl ratio and it was *'more interesting to work like three girls and three boys,'* and where the presence of more girls moderated what she considered as the inappropriate behaviour of the boys who were not *'so loud and bolshie.'*

She further explained that in Mr. Stuart's group they were *'supposed to be sitting boy-girl, boy-girl, but we haven't got enough girls to do that.'* There had originally been four girls in the group but one of the girls had been moved into one of the higher groups. No explanation had been given by the teachers to the rest of the group and Mathilda voiced

the opinion that there was some resentment felt by the other students about this situation as they could not understand what the student had done to warrant what they saw as a promotion. She commented, *'They haven't like told us why or.....she's obviously done enough work or done something to move up a group, but they won't tell us how we can.'* This indicated a serious lack of communication by the teachers which led to uncertainty amongst the students with no understanding of what was required for them to move up. It also led to an increased sense of alienation for Mathilda from a community with which she already felt little identification.

Mathilda considered that both Mr. Tudor's and Mr. Stuart's perception of her understanding was slightly less than her own perception and placed the stone to represent this on the border of the fourth and fifth circle. She believed that this was the result of her not always volunteering answers, although she explained that she did *'know most of it.'* Her view of participation had changed from that which she had expressed in Year 8 as being *'joining in,'* and become more complex. She commented that it was,

'to get involved with the group, to get like an understanding with....people in your class and to almost like help them and like give them some information that they feed back and different things.'

We discussed whether not offering answers could still be seen as participation. Mathilda considered this for some time before answering and had clearly thought about this. She explained that, *'if you are just listening, you are actually taking it in and you are thinking instead of putting up your hand.'* She reflected on her own experience in the classroom and commented on what she perceived as the disadvantages of always offering an answer. *'If you're putting up your hand you're thinking of what you're going to say and you miss out on what other people are saying.'* This coincides with Eleanor's view of the importance of learning from others through listening to their views and illustrates the

value placed on this by both Mathilda and Eleanor. She reiterated, however that she believed that her not answering led to teachers considering her understanding lower than it actually was. She considered that her participation as seen by *'putting up my hand'* in class discussions would be quite low and placed the stone to represent this on the borders of the fifth and sixth circle. She preferred to *'sit there and just listen for a while and you find out a lot more than if you put up your hand and try to give your opinion.'* I argue that Mathilda, by listening and not offering overt evidence of participation may in fact have been taking charge of her own learning (Wenger 1998) in a way that was available to her and enabled her to engage with and attempt to negotiate meanings with the discourse of the subject.

Mathilda revealed that she saw herself as being *'quite shy in a big group.'* This contradicted her perception of herself as being *'not quiet,'* but confirmed Mr. Tudor's perception of her in Year 8, and clearly showed that her demeanour depended on the setting in which she found herself and the moment by moment social interactions which occurred in the setting. This could well have been the reason for her being more reluctant to volunteer answers, although she also expressed the opinion that she was confident of the correctness of her answers and therefore did not feel the necessity of having them confirmed publicly. *'I know what it is and it is in my head so I don't have to put up my hand when there's like thousands of other people putting up their hands.'* She commented that once everyone had finished discussing in the class lesson but had not discovered the correct answer she would *'put up my hand quietly and ask the teacher if it was the right answer.'* However, if it were the right answer she would not wish to say the answer to the students but would want the teacher to *'share it with the class.'*

Once again, as in Year 8, Mathilda considered that her participation in a small group would be higher and placed the stone to represent this in the third circle. The small

group fostered greater participation because she said that in a *'smaller group I'm quite loud and give out my opinion.'* The quality of the discussion in a small group was, she considered, *'different'* from that in a class discussion and there was a smaller audience to which you could voice opinions, *'Discussing things together with the others is easier.'*

Mathilda's view of English was mediated by her view of its organisation and also the amount of help which she received in the lessons. She chose a stone which she considered was *'quite basic'* to represent the subject. She had chosen this stone, she explained because of what she considered as the very diverse components of the subject and her fluctuating understanding of these. She said, *'the stone's quite basic, but it's got different shades on it and some days I understand everything and other days I don't understand it.'* She also explained that she received a great deal of help from her English teacher which she appreciated. She considered that the mixed ability grouping was far preferable to that of homogeneous groupings in subjects which were language based and explained that it was *'better to have different types of people all mixed together because some people can get on with it and others can put up their hands just to talk and explain it and that's very helpful.'* Her relationships within the English group were she considered generally good, but it appeared that this was not consistent as she explained that she had *'some good days'* with the students and *'some days not.'*

Mathilda was, however, not completely relaxed in English lessons and felt a tension because of her difficulties with the written word. She was conscious that it was important for her to maintain concentration in order not to lose the sequence of what was happening in the lesson. Her difficulties meant that as she concentrated on writing one section which took time often the lesson was progressing to another piece of information and it then became more onerous for her to keep pace with the other students. She commented:

'you're always focusing on what you're learning and you've always got to take it in, and you're trying to work out what you've got to write down.'

It was clear that for Mathilda, as for many other students with difficulties with literacy, there was considerable pressure in lessons which sometimes just became too much for them to cope with. Despite help which was available either from adults or peers the effort of trying to decipher either what was written or what was required of them led to frustration and subsequent detachment from the proceedings. Mathilda explained, *'if I don't understand it and people are explaining it over and over you switch off and I can't.....once I've switched off you can't really like listen, it just goes over you totally. If I can't get it I get more teasy (bad-tempered)....If it doesn't come easily I just try and then after that I can't help any more and I just switch off.'*

Mathilda's attitude towards Mathematics lessons was once again affected by factors to do with the nature of the subject, the tasks involved and the size and composition of the group. Despite the fact that the grouping in Mathematics was strictly setted and all the students in this research were in Foundation groups for the subject, Mathilda did not give any indication that this setting reflected badly on the students ability as had been her opinion of the grouping in Humanities. She explained that she *'felt that the organisation was quite good and we are all the same.'* She said that she *'got on with most of the people in the group,'* and, although in the Mathematics group there were also some of the same students that were in the Humanities group, Mathilda revealed that it was *'different.'* She believed that this was because of the nature of the tasks which the students were required to do. These tasks were not to *'do with writing, cos we're working with like numbers and things and it's easier...because it's just like right or wrong.'* Like Henry, Mathilda was able to enjoy competence with the less ambiguous meanings in Mathematics. She considered that the behaviour and atmosphere in Mathematics lessons was better because students were not required to give opinions, but

answers and this, in her opinion, meant that students were not *'like trying to shout out their opinions while others are trying to write.'* There was still additional adult help in the Mathematics lessons and this also was appreciated by Mathilda.

Despite Mathilda being more at ease in Mathematics lessons and enjoying subjects such as Physical Education and Drama, in which she was able to express herself freely with her friends without necessarily having to *'read or write anything every lesson,'* she did not feel any real sense of belonging to the arena of school or of any of the settings which she experienced daily. The most important factor of school was that she spent time with her friends. Her attitude towards school was at best resigned and at worst resentful towards a situation which she felt she was forced to endure rather than enjoy. She explained,

it's difficult because really I don't want to be at school. I don't enjoy being...like orders almost of what to do and it's just like.....I don't enjoy being here and I don't enjoy being inside the whole day and things like that.'

The greatest sense of belonging that she experienced outside school other than with her mother and siblings was that which she enjoyed with the hunting fraternity. This was a set of people who were generally older than Mathilda, but who were *'all friendly.'* Additionally, Mathilda enjoyed the outdoor life and her activities not only with the hunt, but also with horses generally. She was clearly an accomplished horsewoman and enjoyed considerable competence in the activity, with this competence being recognised by the other members of the hunt. For Mathilda not only was her belonging to a community due to competence enacted, an experience which was not enjoyed by her at school, but also the need for a sense of belonging derived from relationships with people who cared about her as person was fulfilled.

Once again as in Year 8 the lesson in which I observed Mathilda's participation in Year 9 was the same lesson as that in which I observed Henry and which was taught by Mr. Stuart. There was also a teaching assistant present although she did not spend any time with Mathilda. Mathilda sat next to Henry at a desk which was on the upright arm of the E arrangement of desks. Bearing in mind Mathilda's comments on the composition of the group I was interested to note that there were three girls present and twenty one boys. The girls were separated from each other and sitting between two boys. This meant that the remaining boys sat next to each other.

The focus of the lesson and the statement concerning this which was written on the board was 'to investigate the effect of aviation on the conduct of The First World War.' Mr. Tudor had distributed text books before the lessons and the first task for the students was to study sources detailing the early development of flight by Orville and Wilbur Wright and the differences between gliding and powered flight. Several students were required to read parts of the passage aloud, but Mathilda was not asked to do so. Mathilda was silent during the reading of the passage and followed it in the book. After the passage had been read Mr. Stuart asked the students what they considered were the most important points of information from the text. Mathilda spoke to Henry about this and although some of the other students volunteered answers Mathilda refrained from offering any of her own. During the discussions in which the other students participated Mathilda paid complete attention to Mr. Stuart and what was being discussed.

The next section of the lesson was devoted to a video of twenty minutes length about the First World War and the formation of the Royal Flying Corps, the types of planes which were used and the weapons with which they were equipped. Mathilda sat quietly watching this, her attitude was relaxed, but it was difficult to discern whether her interest was engaged or whether she was thinking about something else. After the video Mr.

Stuart led a class discussion about the video. Mathilda and Henry discussed some of the issues but when the students were asked to offer answers to questions which Mr. Stuart raised such as when the Royal Flying Corps was formed Mathilda did not volunteer any answers. Mr. Stuart directed questions specifically to some of the boys but did not ask any of the girls.

I was interested to observe the general behaviour of the boys in the lesson, particularly after Mathilda's comments on this. During the discussion two of the boys who were seated at the tables at the side of the E formation had been talking. From Mathilda's attitude it was apparent that this had annoyed her, particularly after Mr. Stuart had reprimanded them, saying, '*come on, boys. That is enough. Pay attention now.*' After five minutes they started to talk again and Mr. Stuart moved one of them to another seat, saying, '*I have asked you once to be quiet. Now move over there.*'

In order to enable student access to the material Mr. Stuart wrote some simplified notes on the vertical roller board. These notes were based on the text, the video and on the discussion which had been generated and he asked the students to copy them into their exercise books. Because Mr. Stuart was writing the notes on the board it meant that one section of the board needed to be raised before the next section could be written. This process reduced the time available for the students to write the notes down in their books, but at no time did Mr. Stuart ask if any of the students needed more time to complete the writing. Mathilda and Henry consulted each other about some of the writing that they had missed when the board was raised, but neither of them was able to remember what had been written and consequently both of them had spaces left in their books.

Although Mathilda had participated in the lesson as far as she had described in the first interview of Year 9, that of listening and taking in, her active participation up to this

point had been negligible, and was further curtailed in this section of the lesson by her inability to complete the writing and therefore the opportunities for learning were also minimised thus reinforcing her marginalisation in the subject.

Mr. Stuart asked the class whether they could see any problems with the guns which were fixed to the planes and told the class to discuss this with the person sitting next to them. Mathilda and Henry discussed this at some depth concentrating on possible difficulties with the weight of the guns and what this might do to the orientation of the plane when flying. Mr. Stuart then asked the students to offer some of their answers for a general discussion. The class seemed reluctant to volunteer and Mr. Stuart said that he would demonstrate some of the problems. He asked for a volunteer. Several students raised their hands, but Mathilda was not among them. Henry volunteered and was chosen and Mr. Stuart asked one of the girls to come to the front.

Mr. Stuart asked Henry to imagine that he was a pilot and the girl to be the propeller to demonstrate that unless the plane were purpose built there was a distinct possibility that any shooting would damage one's own propeller. The atmosphere of the classroom which had, up to that point, been rather formal became more relaxed as the students and Mr. Stuart laughed together. Mathilda joined in with the laughter and once the demonstration was over, continued to concentrate on Mr. Stuart as he revisited the contents of the lesson. The buzzer sounded for the end of the lesson and Mr. Stuart told the students to clear away their books.

Mathilda's participation in this lesson was very different from that in Year 8 and several factors may have contributed to this. She was already antipathetic towards the notion of homogeneous grouping within the Humanities Faculty which meant that, although she sat next to Henry and they worked supportively, the seating arrangements in Mr. Stuart's

classroom gave little opportunity for any discussion other than dyadic interaction. These two organisational structures meant that Mathilda was separated from those students whom she saw as more experienced and knowledgeable others and whom she saw as a support for her in the difficulties she experienced in the discourse and reification of the subject. The composition of the group and the behaviour of some of its members inhibited Mathilda's participation and therefore her learning. Although Mr. Stuart provided some alternative methods of participation his teaching strategies did not open up practice for the students sufficiently to engage Mathilda and in fact only succeeded in extending her disengagement with the subject.

I talked to Mathilda on the day after the lesson. The first subject I covered was the behaviour of the boys in the lesson of the previous day and commented that generally they had behaved well. Mathilda was quick to point out that two of them had been moved by Mr. Stuart to different seats. She explained that each girl was still expected by Mr. Stuart to sit next to a boy, but of her own accord during the past two or three lessons she had moved as far away as was possible from the group of five boys whom she considered to be '*silly*.' This move had resulted in Mathilda's not being able to hear them as much and she said that this had improved the situation for her.

The move had also meant that she was now sitting next to Henry with whom, she commented, she '*got on really well*.' She explained that this was because there was a bond between them because of experiencing difficulties in the classroom and she did not consider that his behaviour was the same as those boys with who she had little patience because of perceived immaturity. Mathilda explained that although both Henry and she experienced difficulties she did not think that they were the same difficulties, but could not articulate the differences. However, she emphasised that there was a mutually

supportive understanding between them of the difficulties that the other experienced.

'They're not the same and so we can help each other out.'

I commented that there appeared to be a businesslike approach with Henry to the work of the previous day and Mathilda agreed and suggested that this was because they had found a satisfactory balance of work and discussion. She explained,

'I find working with him... we help each other. So when we work we work and when we talk we talk sometimes and then we do a load of work and then we go back to talking, so we're not just always working, working, working.'

Although the change of seating had resulted in Mathilda's finding History slightly more bearable she still insisted that she *'didn't really like going to History.'* I asked Mathilda her opinion of the lesson of the previous day and the illustration suggested by Mr. Stuart and asked whether this was typical of the History lessons. Mathilda conceded that the role play of Henry and the girl had been a useful illustration, but did not consider that it was an intervention which was used in the lessons generally, and that *'sometimes Mr. Stuart does that and sometimes he doesn't.'* Her opinion was that in History lessons with Mr. Stuart, *'you just like work and you have to get down to it,'* whereas with Mr. Tudor he often *'like acts out what happened and it is quite gobsmacking because not many teachers do that.'*

I asked Mathilda about the presence of the teaching assistant who had helped several of the students, but not Mathilda. Mathilda explained that the teaching assistant was only present in Humanities lessons once every two weeks and in Science and English lessons once a week, because *'they said, well it's the only place we can fit you in.'* Economies imposed by funding outside the arena of school had been implemented by management within the school in ways which were considered expedient but were having disadvantageous effects on the very students for whom the provision had been devised.

Mathilda read the text from the previous day. Her reading had improved from that of Year 8 and was slightly more fluent, although she still had some difficulty with words like ‘bombarDED’ and others of more than two syllables. She was able to remember the date of the first flight by the Wright brothers, but was unable to remember the date of the start of the First World War, but with some scaffolding remembered the advantages of powered flight. We discussed what the developments in powered flight had meant to civilians in war time and Mathilda was able to explain that it meant that fighting would now be brought ‘*right on the doorstep, right into your homes.*’

Mathilda remembered that when guns were fixed in the first planes the airmen were only able to shoot to the sides. I briefly revisited the role play of the previous day and Mathilda was able to explain that the placement of the propeller meant that shooting was not possible to the front, because, ‘*if you shot the propeller the plane would go down.*’ We discussed the roles of the established services such as the army and the navy and I moved on to possible hypothesising about the training of the pilots, a subject not covered in the lesson and Mathilda wondered ‘*how much experience the trainers in the Royal Flying Corps had, as there had only been eleven years since the first powered flight.*’ Mathilda was able to consider the dangers inherent in the materials used for the construction of the planes and compare them with those of today. She also made the point that there would have been pressure to produce and replace the planes that were lost and that the planes ‘*were made in a hurry.*’

I was impressed by the strength and depth of Mathilda’s answers and her ability to consider such factors as the above. Mathilda’s difficulty with literacy hampered her participation when trying to engage with the reification of the subject of History such as the textbooks. It did not, however, appear to interfere with her participation when listening or discussing with Henry. Due to pressure of time this interview lasted only

twenty five minutes. Mathilda's responses led me to question once again the validity of reliance on written tests to investigate students' learning and teachers' using students' written texts as a source for their judgements about conceptual understanding. It was clear that by using this criterion both Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart had underestimated Mathilda's competence and confidence. Mathilda's responses also confirmed my impressions of Year 8 that with more individual scaffolding Mathilda's negotiation of meaning with the subject and development of transferable skills such as the ability to hypothesise would have been expanded.

Although Mr. Stuart agreed to participate in discussing Mathilda and her participation and therefore her learning, he did not appear as comfortable with the technique of the 'talking stones' as had Mr. Tudor and was reluctant to expand his answers significantly. He chose a smooth stone to represent Mathilda, because he explained that this stone had *'no hard edges to it and there is no abrasive side to this child's character.'* I felt that this was an accurate initial description of Mathilda. However, his next comments led me to believe that he had underestimated Mathilda's depth and was viewing her solely from the perspective of a teacher of History viewing a student, rather than looking below the surface as Mr. Tudor had done. In the process he had underestimated her knowledge and awareness of History as well as her confidence in herself as a schooled person and showed little sign of knowing Mathilda.

'It is a fairly boring stone as well. There is not much in the way of features there.'

This person is quite quiet and quite unremarkable really and this stone is smooth. It is not really a very interesting shape.'

This clearly was what I required him to do, but was not the way in which Mr. Tudor had approached the task either for Mathilda or any of the other students upon whom he had given views. Neither had Mr. Stuart approached the task in this way when commenting on Henry.

He placed the stone representing Mathilda's liking of the subject in the sixth circle, which contrasted with Mathilda's placing it in the fourth circle. Mr. Stuart explained that he had placed the stone this far back because he received '*no impression that History is of any interest intrinsically for her or has any relevance in her life at all.*' He suggested that if History were made available to Mathilda outside school it would make no impact upon her and she would make no connections with what she was learning at school. He added, '*I get the impression that for her History is something that happens twice a week, but there is no application as far as I can see.*' Although Mr. Stuart correctly identified Mathilda's lack of interest he was either unaware of or disinclined to apportion any responsibility for this to his teaching practices.

He suggested that he would place the stone representing Mathilda's understanding of History as being '*no better than 5.*' I asked whether it would be '*around 5,*' but Mr. Stuart reiterated '*no better than 5,*' and explained that he considered that Mathilda's understanding as evidenced by her verbal contributions was '*weak.*' He saw one of Mathilda's problems as being that of a lack of concentration. He considered that he '*tended to talk quite a lot in class,*' and that this tended '*to be a quite a high level,*' and that Mathilda found it difficult to listen and to follow instruction. I had not seen evidence of Mr. Stuart's vocabulary being at a high level in the lesson of the previous day or at one which was not accessible to the students, and neither Mathilda nor Henry had commented on this in their interviews. The lesson, however had been an introduction and therefore it is possible that the vocabulary used by Mr. Stuart had been more basic than would have been usual and might move to a '*high level*' when the topic progressed. It would appear, however, that Mr. Stuart failed to recognise that Mathilda was unable to access some of the tasks because of the pace and reifications employed in his lessons and attributed any failures he perceived to her deficit and not his.

Mr. Stuart added that he thought Mathilda's lack of concentration was '*the main area in need of improvement.*' He acknowledged that Mathilda was '*willing to work hard at her written work,*' but was '*flummoxed if she doesn't clearly understand what she needs to write about.*' Mr. Stuart did not appear to make any connection with the fact that he sometimes used vocabulary which might be difficult for the students to understand and the fact that Mathilda, who suffered from dyslexia and was on Stage 5 of the Special Educational Needs register, did not always understand what was required of her. He commented that her written answers were at a simple level with little explanation and were the product of simple recall. He added that,

'the lack of explanation suggests to me that she is just recalling something which she remembers was relevant, but she could not explain why it was relevant.'

Mr. Stuart considered that Mathilda would view her own understanding as being lower than his perception of it and placed the stone in the sixth circle because of a lack of confidence in her own ability. Mr. Stuart was very positive about Mathilda's class participation and placed the stone representing this in the second circle. He said that he saw participation as being,

A willingness to listen, to answer questions, to ask questions, to get on with the task, to take a risk, to get something wrong, to enjoy getting things right, not disturbing others,' and he believed that Mathilda fulfilled all of these requirements. He commented that he could not remember one lesson where Mathilda who was '*not a time-waster*' had not made an effort to try and that she was '*a well-mannered girl who will try.*' He also stated that he was pleased that Mathilda and Henry were helping each other.

Mr. Stuart's responses indicated that he may have been unaware of the true nature and results of the problems experienced by students such as Mathilda, such as taking a longer time to write notes or needing to have the reification of the subject explained in greater

detail, unlike Mr. Tudor who saw literacy as necessary tools for doing History and took responsibility for removing barriers to this. It also appeared that despite his averring, in the interview that I undertook with him earlier, that he offered a variety of means of participation he nevertheless expected the students to work to the lessons which he provided rather than tailoring his practice to their needs.

Mathilda's participation in school subjects and especially those in which a proficiency in literacy was demanded was strongly affected by several factors. The attitude of the teachers, their practice and how they tailored it to the needs of students, the availability of help from them and from other sources impacted most strongly on Mathilda's participation and learning. Although Mathilda expressed some reservations about the differing abilities of the students in English lessons her attitude generally towards mixed ability grouping in subjects which were language based echoed the findings by researchers such as Klingner et al. (1998), Lyle (1999) and Hallam et al. (1999) detailing students' positive responses, and therefore fuelled her resentment at being assigned to a setted situation and served to disengage her further from school life.

Allocation of funding for ancillary help and its distribution within the arena of Cullishaven School restricted the availability of additional support for Mathilda and other students experiencing similar difficulties, and, I argue, diminished the possibility of nurturing emergent potential. These factors combined to curtail Mathilda's movement along any learning trajectory associated with school.

CHAPTER 8

‘I feel like the little boy in the corner’ – The story of William

William lived with his parents and brother on a housing estate which was within walking distance of Cullishaven School. William, like Eleanor, was on Stage 3 of the school’s Special Education Needs register and was classified as having ‘major literacy difficulties.’ William considered that he was dyslexic, but there was no notification of this on his details. William had scored 70 on verbal reasoning on his Cognitive Assessment Test and 70 for non verbal reasoning and a triple score of 73. He had attained a level 3 for his English in his Key Stage 2 Standardised Attainment Test.

William said that he did not participate in any school organised activities during lunchtimes, but that he belonged to an after school football club in which he had friends and which often played matches competitively out of school. He played football with friends out of school and also enjoyed BMX cycle riding which he also did with his friends around the area in which he lived. He explained that his television viewing tended to take place mainly at the weekends, although he might watch some during the week after he had completed his homework. He preferred to spend time with his friends and the majority of his viewing took place during the winter at either his house or that of his friends. When he watched television he preferred soap operas. William’s access to History outside school, particularly television programmes was limited, largely from his own choice. He did not enjoy any programmes which were concerned with History as he considered that History was *‘good when you actually take part, but when you watch somebody doing it they do it slowly and I lose concentration.’*

William also enjoyed going to the cinema once or twice per month and watching videos. Both of these activities centred around watching action films such as ‘Terminator’ or ‘The Running Man.’ Although William had great difficulty with reading he explained

that he read some books which were funny such as those by Roald Dahl. He also explained that other people bought him books which were mainly about the army because he had a great interest in that. These books tended to be easier to read because there was *'not loads of writing and like pictures so that you know what's going on.'* He had a ticket for the public library and used it to withdraw books about the Army with *'things like helicopters, tanks and the actual soldiers and guns.'* Like all the students at Cullishaven School, William had been issued with a ticket for the school library. He did not, however, use it regularly because he said that he had already withdrawn the books about the army which the library stocked and the other books were, he considered, *'all like really thick books which I can't read or like really thin what aren't interesting.'*

William said that he spent about half an hour per night on homework. The homework which he enjoyed most and which took him the least time to complete was that for Art and also Design and Technology, both of which involved drawing which he liked. This subject released him from the demands of literacy and allowed him to engage in an activity which allowed him a form of competence.

Although William was quite small in stature and light in weight, compared to other boys in Year 8, he chose a middle size stone to represent himself and explained that he had chosen this because *'I'm not really small but I'm not big, it's just sort of... .. because there are bigger and smaller stones. It's like there are bigger people and smaller people than me.'* He chose a large irregular rough stone to represent Design Technology which was his favourite subject. This was chosen because he considered that it successfully represented the subject because of the different types of activities and objects which could be made in the subject and placed the stone in the second circle.

'It's all rough and different shapes and in D.T. like woodwork you can make different shapes. Graphics is like learning to draw things like coming at you or going back and it could be like sandpaper because it is rough.'

Design and Technology, like Art, offered William alternative forms of participation and enabled him to express himself creatively, thereby contributing to an identity of competence.

The subject which William disliked most and found most difficult to deal with was German and to represent this he chose a stone which he considered had *'all different shapes in it.'* These different shapes represented the unpredictability of what could take place in the lessons. He explained that in these lessons *'all things happen.'* For William, whose difficulties were ever present in the arena of school, the German lessons represented a situation in which he had little if any agency except to make the decision not to participate. He said that he found *'spelling and stuff difficult in English and in German it makes me confused.'* His difficulties with literacy meant that he found it almost impossible not only to deconstruct the words in German and therefore have any fluency or understanding of the meaning of the words, but also to remember the content of the lesson afterwards. This meant that the homework for German was also the most difficult and time consuming of all the subjects. At this time the National Curriculum demanded that all students learn a foreign language unless there were exceptional circumstances (DES, 1994). The power exercised by government through the National Curriculum and interpreted by schools in what can only be seen as a commodity based, market oriented education system obviously disadvantages and alienates students such as William who are the most vulnerable sections of our school population.

His experience in the German lessons was further exacerbated by his perception that, with the exception of two of his friends, most of the other students were coping with the

subject better than he was and '*knew all the answers.*' When asked a question by the teacher William was very reticent to respond not only because he was unsure of the answer, '*like sometimes I know the answer but most times I don't,*' but also because he was concerned about the possibility of the very negative responses of the other students whom he considered to be more able than he was. He had been the object of their reactions on a regular basis and was understandably very reluctant to have the situation repeated. '*If I get something wrong they just laugh or are like speaking to friends and looking and pointing at me.*' He experienced marginalisation in these lessons because of his inability to engage with the reifications of the subject, and also experienced non-legitimated peripheral participation, due to the power appropriated by other students, both negative factors. The former constrained his access to the joint enterprise and the latter extended to him an identity of not belonging thus denying him mutuality. He commented that because of the ongoing situation in the German lessons he felt '*really small.*'

William chose a multicoloured smooth stone to represent History. He had chosen this because he felt that the colours looked '*quite old,*' but also because the smoothness of the stone represented Mr. Tudor's practices in the classroom and the fact that he was '*nice to you.*' He placed the stone in the fourth circle and explained that, although he did not like the subject as much as Design and Technology, he still enjoyed it mainly due to Mr. Tudor's attitude not only in the classroom generally, but also if William experienced difficulties. If this occurred William said he felt reassured by the accessibility of Mr. Tudor because '*I just put my hand up and he comes over to explain it.*' Although he experienced this attention in the other Humanities lessons it was not the case in the lessons in many of the other subjects in the curriculum.

William perceived injustice in some other lessons particularly English where he felt there was a less sympathetic attitude towards him from the teacher. *'I put my hand up and someone else puts their hand up and the teacher goes to them.....and I get told off at the end of the lesson for not doing any work.'* The situation was exacerbated for him by the perception he held that the teacher was more lenient towards those students who were able to do the work. He commented that he *'hated'* the fact that the teacher asked these students do *'jobs and stuff'* while he and his friend were expected to *'just sit there and do the work.'* His perception of the situation was that the teacher was of the opinion that it was not necessary for the other students to do the work because they did not have the difficulties which were experienced by William and his friend. Whether William's perception was correct is difficult to ascertain but his inference clearly suggests he perceives differential treatment and a negative view of him by the teacher thus further damaging his self-esteem (Chaplain, 1996a p.103).

William considered that he understood History more than he enjoyed the subject and placed the stone representing this in the second circle. He attributed this, once again, to the practice of Mr. Tudor who endeavoured to make the subject accessible to all the students and moderated his practice particularly for those students who were experiencing difficulties. He contrasted the practices of Mr. Tudor favourably with those teachers whom he considered to be *'normal.'* These *'normal'* teachers would just *'set a task and that's it.'* Mr. Tudor, however, adapted and opened up practice for students so that even what might be considered difficult tasks were made to seem *'really easy, because he makes it so that you can understand really well.'*

Although William considered that his understanding of History was less than his liking of the subject, he did not believe that there would be a correlation between his perception of his understanding and how Mr. Tudor viewed his understanding and placed a stone to

represent Mr. Tudor's perception in the fifth circle. When questioned as to why there was such a wide variation William explained that when he was thinking about what he should write he sometimes would *'just sort of go off...not go off as like go away...just like go off my work and like speak to people.'* This, he commented, did not mean that he did not understand the contents of the lesson, but he found translating his thoughts into written form a task which was often beyond him. The practices demanded by the curriculum to display competence by written evidence did not allow the diversity of practice which would have enabled William to contribute his form of competence, supported him and extended his participation and therefore his learning. Like Mathilda, he obviously understood more than he was able to demonstrate in writing. He explained the difficulty that he experienced when trying to demonstrate his learning in the accepted form:

'I get really good answers in my head and I can say them, but when it comes to writing it down.....when I write it down it's completely different from what's in my head. I can't spell most of the words and I just use a different word.'

He suggested that the resulting words were not always those he really wanted to use and therefore the written work which he submitted to Mr. Tudor did not reflect his true understanding. William felt that it was for this reason that not only in History but in any subject based on written language he enjoyed writing imaginative essays rather than those which were factual. He was very aware of the possibility of making a mistake which appeared to be a pitfall always ready to present itself before him. With an imaginative essay he believed *'you can't go wrong.'* This contrasted strongly in his mind with an essay which was based on fact and on which you had to concentrate and *'really think about it.'* With an imaginative essay he felt a freedom to *'write and write and there can't be a really wrong answer because you're imagining it.'* This gave him access to success

and contributed to an identity of some competence in an area in which success such as this was normally denied to him.

William said that he enjoyed all Humanities lessons, particularly Geography, because he found reading maps easy and was interested in finding *'about all the world and everything,'* and also because the teacher was aware of his problems and, unlike teachers of other subjects outside the Humanities area, did not think that his difficulties with literacy were an excuse for *'being lazy.'* He respected her because she was aware that he did as much as he was able. He also enjoyed Religious Education lessons because the variety of the activities and their nature meant that his participation was increased and his learning extended. He explained that because there was a lot of *'fun'* in the lessons and the students were offered alternative forms of participation such as drawing cartoons with *'little bits of writing,'* he found it easier to concentrate on the content of the lesson.

William was satisfied with having his History lessons with his mixed ability tutor group. He said that he *'got on with everybody in the tutor group,'* but was very aware of relationship problems between some of the other members of the tutor group. He explained that:

'a lot of the tutor group hate each other and if you are like teaching the form for a couple of weeks you can pick out the groups that work together and you can see them in those groups at lunchtime and stuff.'

William said that this animosity amongst other members of the tutor group did not affect his participation in class lessons, particularly History where Mr. Tudor supervised open discussions and he placed the stone in the first circle to represent his participation. He said he was happy to voice an opinion even if it were wrong because Mr. Tudor would make *'a joke out of it and that makes you feel that even if it's wrong it's like fun. It's fun*

if you get it wrong and it's fun if you get it right.' It did, however, affect his participation in a group discussion. William said that his participation in a very small group would be high and placed the stone representing this in the first circle. However he explained that this would not be an accurate representation if he were to consider his participation in a larger group in which case it would be much less. He most enjoyed working with one other person a student that had been his friend since the beginning of primary school and with whom he shared a close and supportive relationship. He explained, *'we know quite a lot of things about each other and because he knows quite a lot of personal things about me I feel I could tell him anything, really.'* The relationship was further strengthened in William's opinion because the other student also had difficulties with literacy and therefore each of them understood the other's problems.

He commented that he felt relaxed when working with this student and a small group of friends.

'When you're in a small group you don't want to fall out with anyone and you'll stick together and if I do get it wrong with a little group of my friends, they just make it funny and like whisper the answer in my ear.'

He contrasted this with a sense of unease when working in a larger discussion group with other members of the class in which there were tensions in the relationships. *'Someone always wants to take charge of everyone else and other people will just go off and get bored.'* Additionally he articulated the disquiet and sense of marginalisation that he experienced if he and his friend were in a group discussion in which there were students who not only did not experience their difficulties but did not value any contribution which he and his friend might make.

'Everyone else comes out with these really good answers and everyone talks about it, but if I say something not many people agree on it and when my friend and I say something most of the people think that what we say is not very important.'

This lack of recognition or acceptance of William's contributions served to minimise any possible sense of belonging for him and his experience could not be asserted or recognised as a form of competence (Wenger, 1998) therefore reinforcing his marginalisation.

The lesson which I observed in Year 8 was based on the causes of poverty in sixteenth century England. Before the class arrived Mr. Tudor had written the lesson objective of considering 'Why was poverty such a problem in sixteenth century England (Tudor)' and two headings of 'How were the poor of Bristol helped?' and 'How were the poor of Bristol punished?' on the board. He had also distributed the text books which were to be used in the lesson to each table. As the class entered Mr. Tudor welcomed them with *'Hi, guys. How are you today? Come in and settle down and get your exercise books out please.'* The class came in chatting, some stopping to speak to Mr. Tudor and then settling down quickly in their places. William came in with his friend, but they separated with William going to be seated with a group of three other boys at a group of tables which was in front of Mr. Tudor's desk, with William being in the place immediately next to Mr. Tudor and his friend going to a table in the corner of the classroom.

Mr. Tudor introduced the lesson and explained that it was to investigate the learning objective on the board and that to start the lesson there would be a video concerned with the beggars who lived in Bristol in the sixteenth century. The video lasted approximately twenty-five minutes and covered the reasons for the increase in poverty including the dissolution of the monasteries and the subsequent increase of begging; change of land use from mainly arable to sheep farming and the resulting reduction of employment of labourers and frequency of bad weather resulting in bad harvests. The video also depicted two beggars, one of whom suggested that he made a satisfactory

living begging, explaining some of the tricks he used to gain sympathy from the public and another who wished to obtain work, but was unable to do so. The final part of the video considered that differing attitudes to the poor displayed by the burgesses of Bristol. During the video William was completely attentive and did not speak to any of the other students at the table.

After the video Mr. Tudor led a discussion about the main points covered on the video. His first question was, '*where did the poor go after the dissolution of the monasteries?*' A girl answered '*onto the streets,*' and Mr. Tudor replied, '*yes. Well done.*' William watched Mr. Tudor and appeared to be listening to the discussion. Mr. Tudor then asked whether there was anything else which had an effect on the poor. A boy answered that as more landowners were converting to raising sheep instead of crops there was not a need for so many workers. Mr. Tudor said, '*excellent.*' He then asked what might be the cause of so many poor people coming to Bristol. During this time William was watching Mr. Tudor, but not offering any answer. A boy on another table answered that Bristol had a reputation for looking after the poor.

Mr. Tudor acknowledged this answer and then said, '*what might happen if the rich of the city ignored the poor? I want you to talk about this with the person next to you or the others at your table.*' William started to talk to the boy next to him and said to him, '*there might be a riot.*' After one minute Mr Tudor brought the class back to a general discussion and asked for suggestions for an answer. A boy on another table to William's said, '*there might be a rebellion.*' Mr. Tudor asked if anyone could explain what that meant and William raised his hand and answered, '*there might be fighting and violence.*' Mr. Tudor said, '*yes, well done, William.*' William did not respond in any way to this acknowledgement and looked down at his book, perhaps indicating a preference for not having attention drawn to him.

A boy at another table made the suggestion that some of the people in Bristol may have been so rich that they did not feel that there was any necessity for them to bother about the poor and would not be thinking about the possibility of a riot. Mr. Tudor acknowledged this possibility but queried that as many people in the sixteenth century were concerned about heaven and hell might this have an effect on their perceptions? A girl answered that there might be the possibility that they would have thought that giving to the poor may have been a way of ensuring that they went to heaven. During these exchanges William did not turn to look at either of the two speakers, but appeared to be listening while looking at his book. It seemed that William was in fact participating by listening and managing his own learning in a way with which he felt comfortable.

Mr. Tudor then asked the class to draw in their exercise books the table which was on the board detailing the help and punishment that the beggars received. William then turned to the boy next to him, smiled and started to talk. Some of the other students also started talking and Mr. Tudor said, *'by the time I have counted to twelve you will have set out the table like it is on the board.'* William then took his pencil case from his bag and started to work. Mr. Tudor counted from 1 to 3 and then said 7 at which the many of the students said *'oh, Sir,'* at which Mr. Tudor laughed and said *'hey, I make the rules up here.'* The students, including William laughed and Mr. Tudor said, *'okay 4.'* William continued to work.

Mr. Tudor asked William's friend seated at the other table if he was *'okay'* and the boy agreed that he was. Mr. Tudor approached William to check on his progress and then gave him a ruler to enable him to complete the table. He then said *'it is nice to see you working with some urgency here, William. You have got the columns set out properly. Well done.'* Mr. Tudor continued to count to twelve and asked the students to put down their pens and to turn to the relevant page in the text book and to look at the section

which outlined the grievances of the burgesses of Bristol. He said that he would read the material to the class and wanted them to follow it and while doing this to be thinking about the two sections of the table, but not to do any writing. William started to talk to the boy next to him and Mr. Tudor repeated the instructions at which point William stopped talking. Mr. Tudor read the section asking the students once again to follow it. After Mr. Tudor had read the material the bell rang for the end of the lesson and Mr. Tudor asked the class to clear away their belongings and that he would collect the textbooks himself. William cleared away his books and pens, gave the ruler back to Mr. Tudor and went over to the boy from whom he had been separated and left the room chatting to him.

It was evident that Mr. Tudor and the students enjoyed the lesson and Mr. Tudor exerted a firm but light authority with them. William's demeanour throughout the lesson was relaxed and, although he only volunteered one answer, it was clear that he was generally engaged with the content of the lesson and was participating in ways which were constructive for him and furthered his learning. The task of drawing the table was one which he could accomplish and the completion of the table was to be undertaken in the next lesson. He would not therefore be in a position of having to grapple with written text on his own.

At the beginning of the interview after the lesson I raised the point about his sitting in a different place at the front of the classroom at the group of tables in front of Mr. Tudor's desk. William commented that '*Sir said sit there,*' and he thought that this move had been made to enable him to see the board more clearly and to concentrate more. He said that he would have preferred to have remained sitting next to his friend with whom he had the close relationship and with whom there was a mutual support system, but said

that he believed that since he had been sitting in the new location the neatness of his work had improved.

William said that there were '*only a couple of words that I couldn't read but the rest of it was okay*' about the text which had been used in the lesson. However, when he started to read the text his reading was very hesitant and he had difficulty with words such as 'proud'. The text included words such as 'almshouses' and 'medieval,' and after a very short time William stopped reading completely. Since some of the questions in the interview were based on the text I offered to read it for him, an offer which he accepted. I read another piece of primary source text and asked him to identify whether it was primary or secondary. He correctly identified it as being primary, but was unable to give a reason for his answer. This suggests that William had not completely grasped the elements of this historical convention.

I asked him why he thought Bristol had been chosen as a topic and he very quickly responded correctly that this was the city which was '*at that time a pretty rich place and the beggars thought that they would go there and beg and they would get more money than staying where they are.*' He was also able to differentiate between what had been described on the video as the deserving and undeserving poor. He explained that the deserving poor would be seen as those who were injured and unable to work and the undeserving poor would be those who chose not to work and, as explained by Mr. Tudor in the lesson, would undertake ruses such as eating soap to froth at the mouth to gain sympathy.

We discussed the harsh laws and penalties which were imposed on those members of the public who were judged to be vagrants and William suggested that these would have been

imposed to ensure that the reputation of Bristol would not be put at risk and more affluent people would not be deterred from coming to the city.

'If they see all the poor people everywhere... even if they see just a couple of streets like that and they would think that it was all like that and they wouldn't bother going there... and the poor people would think "Oh I am not going there, because if I am found guilty I will get tortured" and would think "well I will just do it somewhere else.'

I led the discussion to the subject as to why some of the burgesses of Bristol would have given a daily free meal of meat to the poor in the famine of 1596. William thought about this for some time and then explained that some of the burgesses may have been moved by some altruistic feeling and thought *'oh that could be us and we should help them.'* He also suggested that the charity might have been engendered by expediency in case *'the poor could sort of group up and cause hassle in the town such as beating them up or setting fire to the houses.'*

William appeared to be very confident answering the questions and I moved on to a discussion which had taken place the previous day about what were the possible causes of the increase in the number of beggars in and around Bristol. These covered such possibilities as the dissolution of the monasteries or bad weather leading to poor harvests. William's recall of this discussion was extensive and he was able, with no prompting from me, to explain that unemployment for many had resulted from the change of land use from arable farming to raising sheep which meant that *'if they had crops they would need more people to do the crops but when they changed them to sheep.....all they would need is like one shepherd.'*

William became more articulate as the interview progressed and he was able to explain that poor harvests meant that there was less food and therefore the price of food went up

and *'if there is more food the price goes down.'* Because of the evidence of his increased confidence I decided to ask him to hypothesise as to the importance of each of the possibilities for the increase in begging. He suggested that each of the reasons was equally as important as the rest.

'They are all based on the same thing really. Some of the churches used to look after them, but they shut down. Someone is saying that the landowners couldn't afford to keep the old ways going and that is all about land and stuff and the weather was probably half the cause of it. If the weather was good the prices would go down so that the poor do not have to spend so much money on food and stuff and could keep some food away. But when there is bad weather the poor people have to spend most of their money on food and then would have to go out begging again to get more money to buy more food.'

William's responses in this interview indicated that his perception that his understanding was high was correct. As with Eleanor and Mathilda, it appeared that his practice of participating by listening had contributed to his very successful negotiation of meaning with the spoken discourse of the subject in this lesson and, if using this as an exemplar of his learning, it would be easy to assume that he was in the process of significant movement along a learning trajectory in this subject at least.

The following interview was with Mr. Tudor and he chose a small stone to represent William not only because of William's small physical stature but also because of his demeanour which Mr. Tudor considered constructed a quieter, smaller and less visible presence in the classroom. He explained:

'If you went down to the beach probably you would notice the big boulders standing out there, because you'd stub your toe on them if you weren't careful, but he's one of the pebbles I think.'

This perception clearly contrasted with William's view of his own stature as being '*not really small and not really big*,' but accorded with the identity which he had appropriated from his experiences in the German lessons. Mr. Tudor placed the stone representing William's liking of History on the borders of the third and fourth circles, but explained that he found it a difficult task as he believed that William's liking of the subject was linked very strongly with the good relationship which he enjoyed with Mr. Tudor in the classroom. This resonated with the views that William had expressed in his first interview and also with the way that William reacted to Mr. Tudor in the lesson which I observed.

Mr. Tudor considered that William understood a considerable amount of the subject and could express himself successfully verbally and this view certainly confirmed William's responses in the interview on understanding the lesson. However, Mr. Tudor considered William had such a problem in '*getting that down in any kind of formal written way and writing things down, being such a complete non-starter for him*,' that it was impossible for him to separate the two types of evidence of understanding and placed the stone representing William's understanding on the border of the fourth and fifth circles. This contrasted strongly with William's view of his own understanding in which the stone was placed in the second circle. However it corresponded closely with William's perception of Mr. Tudor's view and the reasons for a much lower estimation. William's difficulty with the written reifications of the subject and school's representation of success penalised him considerably and probably gave an inaccurate representation of his true understanding for much of the time.

Mr. Tudor also considered that William's understanding often seemed to be high in the shorter term but after several lessons he appeared not to be able to make connections with the work which had been covered previously, although Mr. Tudor accepted that these

connections might be made but William did not offer any evidence for it in class. Mr. Tudor did not appear to make the connection that William's difficulty with literacy meant that opportunities which were open for other students such as revisiting texts or written notes to reinforce emergent learning were not necessarily available for William and he might be relying solely on his memory as a resource.

Mr. Tudor also believed that where William was seated in the classroom made a difference to his concentration. *'If he goes out to the geographical margins of the classroom then he will drift right out. I have seen him...away with the fairies.'* This accorded strongly with William's own revelation that he *'went off'* sometimes in the classroom, but did not imply that Mr. Tudor understood the reasons for this action of William as articulated by him, i.e. that he was attempting to formulate ways of writing his thoughts. This example illustrates the struggle that students, such as William have, to negotiate meanings within classroom subjects and translate these into legitimate representations whereby learners are judged, while maintaining the pace set by teachers and other participants within the community. It also suggests that students' actions may be misinterpreted by teachers however benign their intentions.

Mr. Tudor considered that William's participation in class lessons would not be particularly high and placed a stone to represent this in the fourth circle. He believed that a possible cause of this lack of participation was that in a mixed ability situation William was *'quite insecure'* because of the presence of some students who were very articulate and were always willing to offer answers, but that William had to be *'really drawn out'* to make a response. This opinion appeared to be in complete opposition to that expressed by William about his own participation in general class lessons, but corresponded to what I had witnessed in the lesson.

Mr. Tudor commented that in a Special Educational Needs meeting of the Humanities Faculty William had been *'picked out as somebody who has a distinct lack of self-esteem,'* and that this lack of self-esteem had been attributed to William's awareness of his own difficulties. The teachers in the Humanities Faculty had expressed misgivings about William's lack of attentiveness and what they saw as his tendency to be easily distracted and also distracting to other students. Mr. Tudor said that there was a feeling of frustration common to the members of the Faculty about William's difficulty in starting a task and commented *'I guess when you have 30 people in the classroom of differing abilities you need a majority to get going and at least get started, whereas William's hand is up immediately indicating he needs help.'*

Mr. Tudor revealed that following the above meeting there had been a meeting between Cullishaven School's Special Needs Co-ordinator, William and William's parents. At this meeting it had been decided that as a response to his Special Educational Needs review William would not be allowed to sit next to his close friend in lessons in future. This had been decided because it was considered that the proximity of the two students was proving disadvantageous to their attentiveness and therefore their learning. Mr. Tudor explained:

'I suppose that our top priority is their learning. We actually felt that by continuing to sit next to this friend neither William nor he were doing each other any favours and that they were actually holding each other back. They were actually setting their own level of expectation which was lower than the one that we would want for them. We wanted to break them out of that and that is why we physically moved them.'

I queried whether the change had been agreed with William and Mr. Tudor reflected that although it might have been discussed with William since he had been at the meeting with his parents and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, William had probably

had the move *'presented to him as a fait accompli. He took it without question. I said, "William I want you to sit here from now on, and he didn't make any noises about it."* I questioned whether he thought that William would have made any complaint and Mr. Tudor responded *'he might well have done, yes.'* However I doubt very much whether this would have occurred as William had communicated a definite sense of powerlessness in his identity as a student and would have been unlikely to challenge any decisions made by those he considered more powerful. While identifying with the difficult plight of the teachers I argue that these actions appear to be a very clear example of those representing the arena of school, that is the teachers, exerting power over a student who experienced severe difficulties with literacy, was considered to have low self-esteem and was being labelled as being a distraction to other students. The use of this power to separate William and his friend, despite being done for the ostensibly laudable reason of extending and improving their learning, had in fact removed one of the only support systems with which they felt truly comfortable and upon which they could always rely, thereby decreasing further what little agency they might experience within the arena of school.

Mr. Tudor revealed that he had been discussing the students who experienced difficulties with literacy with a member of the Religious Education department who believed that the students in Year 8 tended to grasp the concepts in Religious Education more easily than those concepts in the other Humanities subjects. Although William had not articulated this in the interview he had commented that he found Religious Education the most interesting and easiest to understand of all the Humanities subjects. Mr. Tudor commented that William *'latched on to topics which had a human interest,'* and was *'easier to keep on board'* with material such as this. Once again, as it was for Eleanor and Mathilda, the content of the lesson was influential in enabling access to the subject for William.

Mr. Tudor said that he had discussed the textbooks with William and how he coped with reading these. He explained that William had commented that he *'got most of his learning from things he sees or hears rather than reading.'* This had been confirmed not only in his responses to questions about the lesson which I had observed but also in a conversation which Mr. Tudor had with a teaching assistant who was helping William produce a leaflet on witchcraft in the sixteenth century. She commented that William had volunteered correct information which was not available in the textbook but which he had heard Mr. Tudor discuss in the lesson. Mr. Tudor also admitted that it was a *'non-starter for students like William for a teacher to say "right guys turn to page 36 and do the questions.'* He considered that much more could be achieved by practice being opened up for the students with alternative forms of participation being offered and an example of what the end result should look like.

The picture of William which had emerged in Year 8 was that of a student who had low self-esteem, enjoyed little sense of agency within the arena of school, and in many instances saw himself as a victim of a system with which he had little power to negotiate. His difficulties with literacy appeared to mask his true ability and restricted his engagement with the reification of school subjects, such as texts and the accepted forms of representing understanding, which reflect arena practices mediated by national assessment policy etc. and the shared experience of these with other participants in the community of schooled historians.

By the time the questionnaires for Year 9 were due to be completed William's behaviour, particularly in those lessons in which he experienced difficulties had deteriorated and he had established a pattern of absenteeism. After discussion with his Head of Year and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator it had been decided by Cullishaven School that William should spend some of the lessons in which his behaviour had become poorer in

the Learning Support area which was run by a designated full time Learning Support Tutor. Humanities was not a lesson in which William's behaviour had deteriorated, but Humanities lessons often occurred on the days on which William was absent from school. I arranged with the Learning Support Tutor to visit William on one of the occasions that he was in the area and helped him to complete the questionnaire. On the day that I completed the questionnaires with William there were no other students in the area and, although it would have been convenient to continue with the interview once the questionnaire was complete, I decided not to do this as I realised that many issues had arisen since our conversation in Year 8 and more time was needed to do justice to these and arranged a time with William when he was sure to be in school.

In the interview in Year 9 William was once again happy to participate. He said that he no longer played football in the after school club and did not participate in any other school organised activities as he said that there was '*nothing at school which really interests me.*' He continued to enjoy his BMX riding and was saving up to buy his brother's bicycle now that his brother had bought a new one. He said that there had been some improvement in his reading and on Sundays he went with his father to the local hospital where his father ran a hospital radio station and allowed William to read out '*little bits like lottery numbers and stuff like that and to go on the computer and get information from it like about the traffic.*'

He also said that his father was helping him with his reading and revealed that his father had also had difficulties with literacy and so he '*understands what it is like.*' William felt that he had progressed well with this and he was now able to read '*quite long bits.*' He also intimated that while his parents understood his difficulties this had not always been the case with his brother who had been more unsympathetic and, on occasions, insensitive. Since spending time reading with his father, however, William now felt

more confident and if his brother showed him a newspaper William said, *'now I actually try to read it.* William said that his brother now understood and would not *'show me up by accident like asking me to go and read a bus timetable when we are out with our mates.'* It was evident from this comment that William was seldom free from the spectre of his difficulties and the apprehension of his identity of incompetence in this sphere being displayed either within the arena of school or outside.

William said that although he still found some reading difficult he continued to read books *'about the army and cars.'* He said that he enjoyed listening to audio books and also reading poetry which he found easier because the poems were *'short and you can just read it over again, but stories are hard because if you have to keep stopping you can't keep up with the story.'*

William said that since the beginning of Year 9 the situation at school had deteriorated for him and explained that he felt that he was unable to live up to other people's expectations of him. When asked to pick a stone to represent himself, William chose two stones, one for his representation of himself at school and one for outside of school. He said that being able to choose stones was important because he considered that the influence of other people constructed his identity. *'Everyone makes me feel what I feel, makes me small or big.'* The stone that he chose to represent him at school was a very small stone,

'because in like lessons a lot of people keep putting their hands up and can like answer all the questions and I'm sitting down not saying anything and I feel small...I'm like the little boy in the corner.'

Once again as in Year 8 William experienced a powerlessness in the construction of his identity as a student in conditions which were not of his own choosing (Griffiths, 1995), and withdrawal from the situation in the form of absenteeism was used as a strategy for

self-protection (Chaplain, 1996a). Because his attendance had deteriorated dramatically his difficulties with academic work were exacerbated and missed work contributed significantly to his inability to engage with academic subjects.

The stone which he chose to represent his identity outside school was *'just an average stone.'* This was chosen because his friends outside school treated him, as he said, *'just as I am'* and did not make demands upon him which he felt could not fulfil. He contrasted this with the situation at school where he commented that some of the teachers expected standards from him which he was unable to attain and that whatever he did achieve *'was not good enough.'* Although he confided that he was doing his *'best,'* the attitude of some of the teachers appeared to William to be not only a comment on the work which he produced but also on his character. This perception affected his self-esteem and his identity of an incompetent student was increased.

'Inside I think that's my best, but obviously they think differently. It's not that good and that makes me think I'm not that good really.'

He said that while he was in fact happy to come in to school in lessons he felt himself under constant scrutiny, was apprehensive about the reaction of staff and students to his inability to participate and therefore was reluctant to attempt to answer questions.

'If I get asked a question and I get stuck on it.....They're waiting for me to say it, but I can't. People are looking at me and are surprised that I don't know the answer... ..but it is too hard and I've got like anger building up and I want to let it out but I can't at school.'

He explained that because he found it difficult to read and spell he became inattentive and admitted that his behaviour deteriorated and he then *'got into trouble and it all starts again.'* The effects of the factors contributing to William's disaffection were cumulative and each negative experience in school provided the basis for his future expectations not

only of his own ability but also the reactions of staff and students. His past was present (Rogoff 1995).

He revealed that there had been a meeting earlier in the Spring term between the Special Needs Co-ordinator, his parents and a deputy headteacher as a result of the school's concern about his behaviour and increased absences. At this meeting it had been decided that a teaching assistant would be provided in as many lessons as possible to support William and that he would be able to take work into the Learning Support Centre instead of attending those lessons which he found most difficult such as German. William appreciated this extra support particularly in lessons because it meant that if he were asked a question he *'always had someone to fall back on.'*

His attitude towards History had changed greatly in Year 9. He felt that this was due mainly to the modular system which meant that he was not being taught all the time by Mr. Tudor who *'knew all about him.'* He chose two stones to represent History in Year 9, one stone which was what William considered to be *'average'* for the lessons in which he was taught by Mr. Tudor and one which was much smaller for those lessons in which he was taught by Mr. Stuart and which he viewed more negatively. Despite the fact that in both settings the student composition in the Foundation group was the same William perceived different behaviours from the students as a reaction to the practices of the different teachers. The altered behaviour of the students affected the learning which was available to William and his participation within the settings. In Mr. Tudor's lessons William felt a sense of belonging to the group community as he perceived all the students as being *'the same'* and he was like *'everyone else, blending in and not the odd one out that can't do the work.'* In Mr. Stuart's lessons, in contrast, he was once again marginalised as he saw the students behaving differently and *'rushing to put their hands up and I sort of don't have clue.'*

William believed that in Year 8 when he had been taught by Mr. Tudor he had participated more in class discussions and that Mr. Tudor had moderated his practice to ensure that all students, regardless of ability were able to do the work, giving extra help to those who needed it.

'Mr. Tudor wasn't setting hard work that a few people can do and do well. He set it average so we all can do it and all get on with it. Mr. Tudor sort of gave me support in lessons and he always said if you can't do the homework come in and I'll give you help with it.'

In contrast with this he considered that Mr. Stuart did not adapt his practice sufficiently for those students whose extensive difficulties with literacy created problems for them to maintain the same pace as those students who did not experience this problem. He explained, *'Mr. Stuart writes quicker and quicker and thinks people have finished and then quickly rubs it off and a few people haven't.'* This pace meant that William was unable to complete the work and in his books there were *'just bits here and there.'*

William explained that he had compared his Year 9 exercise book with that of Year 8 when discussing his progress with his mother and both were disappointed with the work in the Year 9 book. *'You can really see the difference. My mum could read back loads of it in Year 8 and make sense of it and now it's all sort of jumbled up.'*

He expressed disappointment at the way in which the modules were undertaken in Year 9 in Mr. Stuart's class and in which he felt he was unable to do *'any, any of the work.'* He said that, despite the fact that he tried very hard to keep up with the work, the material he produced was never good enough to satisfy the standard which he believed Mr. Stuart had set for him. These factors strongly influenced not only his liking of the subject but also his sense of belonging in the two different settings. He compared his sense of belonging in the History settings with that which he experienced at the Territorial Army

unit which he attended after school one evening a week. Here he said that his sense of belonging was very high and placed the stone representing this in the second circle. He felt this because from a young age he had been interested in the army because his father had been a soldier. He said that he *'really, really liked going because I've met someone like in the same year and he's got the same sort of problems....and although we do have do some writing we help each other out.'*

He then contrasted this sense of belonging with that in the two different History classes and placed his sense of belonging and liking of the subject in the class taught by Mr. Tudor in the third circle which he considered quite high. This was once again due to the practice of the teacher whom he considered,

'doesn't put people in an awkward spot. I feel like I'm sort of supposed to be in there, because the way he does the work.....it's not easy but it gives me a little bit of a challenge but not too hard.....and he walks round and helps everyone and everyone enjoys it and he enjoys it.'

Importantly for William was the fact that he perceived that Mr. Tudor always appreciated the work that he produced even though there may be alterations or improvements to be made to it. Consequently this appreciation had the effect of motivating William to *'do more for him, because if he is proud of what I have done I'll do more of this.'* He was also confident that Mr. Tudor would not ask him to do anything of which he was not capable.

In contrast he placed the stone representing his liking of the subject and feeling of belonging in those lessons taught by Mr. Stuart in the fifth circle. Once again he attributed this more negative perception to the attitude of the teacher, because he found the work more difficult with Mr. Stuart and he was unable to *'catch on to what he is doing.'* William experienced extreme marginalisation and he said that he felt that he

'was not supposed to sort of be there.' It seemed that Mr. Stuart was extending an identity of not belonging to the History group and as such was making explicit that William did not have the ability to negotiate meaning and William was aware of this. Added to this was the suspicion on William's part that Mr. Stuart expected him to be able to do exactly the same as the other students and was not really aware of William's difficulties. This was the cause of what William considered to be Mr. Stuart's unsympathetic attitude to the amount and standard of work which William produced. This in turn made William resentful and he explained that when Mr. Stuart said, *'oh, it's not what I expected from you, I don't feel like doing any more.'*

William considered that his understanding of the subject had deteriorated while being taught by Mr. Stuart and placed the stone representing this in the sixth circle. However he considered that Mr. Stuart would probably place his understanding as being much higher and placed the stone to represent this in the third circle. He said that he believed that Mr. Stuart did not understand his difficulties when he approached him to clarify what to do and believed that Mr. Stuart thought that he was *'just lazy and could not be bothered to do it and that's probably why he's not giving me help. He thinks I'm just mucking around.'* William made the comment that often if he approached a teacher and said, *'I can't do this... they will say "there is no such word as can't,"'* and, like Mr. Stuart, would dismiss William's inability as laziness.

William explained that he wanted to do the work and had a lot of ideas which he wanted to communicate, but as in Year 8 he always found transferring the ideas into a written form very difficult and was not always successful in achieving this.

'A lot of stuff I've got in my head, but I just can't get it down on paper. If I try to put it down on paper it always comes out different to what I meant to sort of say.'

His view of the Foundation group in Humanities was mixed and he placed a stone representing this in the third circle. He was of the opinion that the smaller group was a help because the teacher had more time to give to the students and although he still found the work hard *'it would be worse if I was in a higher group.'* However, he was critical of the composition of the group as he thought there were some more able students that were *'really clever and do loads of work and sometimes they find it too easy and I'm sort of like not getting it.'* This situation confirmed to him his identity of an incompetent student and he commented that *'when that happens and I can't read or understand then I feel that I am at the bottom of the bottom group'* and decreased his already diminished self-esteem.

William considered that participation might be seen as *'taking part,'* and that listening did not constitute participating for him because he found it difficult to concentrate, whereas being involved in practical activities increased his participation. William considered that his class participation in History when being taught by Mr. Tudor would be high and placed the stone representing this in the second circle, but it would be much lower for his class participation when being taught by Mr. Stuart, probably in the fourth or fifth circle. He also considered that when he was taught by Mr. Tudor who allowed William to sit next to his friend in this smaller setting his group participation would be high and placed the stone representing this in the first circle. However, for William there was an additional issue that influenced his ability to participate and that was to do with the number of students in a small group. Division of labour is seen as an important part of participation and William saw himself as being redundant if there were too many students in a group.

'If they need a group of three and only have two and by going there you make the three I feel I am taking part....but if there's a group of four and then I make it up to five then I don't really feel that I am needed.'

He commented that the boy/girl seating arrangements in Mr. Stuart's class did not allow for small group work, thus reducing opportunities for his participation and he considered therefore that his perception of participation in this setting would be much lower.

For William settled organisation in subjects which were language based appeared to be the most beneficial form of classroom organisation. He felt uncomfortable in mixed ability settings in these subjects due to the presence of those students whom he considered were more able. This was reflected in his comments on the organisation in English. He placed a very small stone representing his liking of the English organisation in the fourth circle because he did not like the fact that all the students '*were mixed up together.*' This accentuated and highlighted the difficulties which he experienced in the classroom. '*If you put like the clever ones in there it makes me look worse that I actually am at the work.*' There was not always a teaching assistant to help him and he did not consider that having students who could do the work and voice their opinions might act as scaffolding and therefore aid his understanding, because as he explained: '*when I can't do it and I am not getting any help I just sort of switch off and sit there and do something else like drawing and stuff.*'

He did not '*switch off*' if the work did not involve extensive amounts of reading and writing and explained that earlier in the term in English lessons the students had been required to write a play which he found very difficult and although he had '*all these ideas*' the task of converting them into a written form was one which he found almost impossible. However, a week later the students were allowed to video record a play in a group and William found this much easier because he could allow all the '*good ideas in my head to come out in front of the camera.*' This access to an alternative method of participating allowed William to engage with the joint venture of the community and

enabled him to display competence thus relieving him, for a short time at least, of the negative identity which enveloped him.

His view of the English organisation was contrasted with that of Mathematics. William chose a large stone, which he explained meant that he enjoyed a subject, to represent his perception of Mathematics and placed this in the second circle to represent his liking of the subject. His obvious enjoyment of Mathematics lessons was attributable to three factors. The first was the fact that the subject was strictly setted and he placed the stone once again in the second circle to represent his appreciation of this organisation. He explained that in this grouping the students were *'either the same or just above me,'* and all the students related well to each other. Secondly, there was no restriction as to which student was allowed to sit next to William which he considered helped his learning. William explained that in this situation, because he understood most of the material, he found his learning was reinforced when discussing the work with his peers and listening to their answers. It was clear that other peers were important learning resources for these students. Their difficulties with the written word meant that they were more reliant on the spoken word and the fact that some of their peers would share a discourse which was different to that of the teachers and more accessible. As William commented, *'I do learn a lot more in that 'cos if we 're doing sort of a big discussion you're sort of like talking to each other and discussing it. When we put our hands up I find that teaches me quite a bit.'*

Thirdly, there were always at least two teachers in the lessons and sometimes a teaching assistant. This meant that help was always available and William considered that the teachers and teaching assistants always explained *'things really well.'* Not only did they explain concepts in ways which were accessible to the students but they were approachable and were aware of problems which were likely to occur. William

interpreted this practice as those teachers being more sympathetic towards the difficulties of the students and anticipating them. *‘They know us and know what we need help on. I mean we don’t have to keep going, “can you come over here, please.”’* William considered that one particular Mathematics teacher had ideal practice to retain discipline in the classroom, that of making the lessons enjoyable and fun and always ended the lesson with a game related to Mathematics if the students had worked hard in the lesson. William said that the students all liked the lessons because the teacher *‘makes it fun and we think we want to come to Maths and do more of that sort of stuff and work.’*

William considered that he participated much more in subjects such as Design and Technology, Science and Information Technology where there was a greater practical element to the lessons and in which he had an identity of competence. William explained that *‘being shown how to do something really does make me learn.’* He used the example of his brother taking a motor bike engine apart and showing William how to do it. William said that initially he could not remember how his brother had undertaken the task but then his brother encouraged William to do it under his supervision and William said that he now understood how to do this properly now. He explained that this was how he understood concepts in Science and *‘really liked’* the subject. His enjoyment of the subject was also enhanced by the presence of an understanding teacher who knew *‘all about’* William and the tasks in which he would need more help. It appeared, from his responses, that William was very aware of being known and not known and was very vulnerable to this. He appreciated the sensitivity of the teacher who knew the most suitable occasions to ask William a question in class discussions.

‘Sometimes he’ll ask me a question he thinks I sort of know and like give me a bit of a challenge but the ones he knows I definitely won’t be able to do he won’t ask me. He’ll ask me when no-one’s around and see if I can get them then.’

William explained that he enjoyed Design Technology because he *'liked making stuff.'* He had a sympathetic teaching assistant who would help him by copying the written work from the board in these lesson. William was grateful for this help which enabled him to *'spend more time on the project and although it takes longer than other people it comes out quite nice.'*

William contrasted the attitude of the teachers and teaching assistants who were willing to spend time with him and understood the difficulties that he experienced with those who appeared not to take into account the problems he encountered through trying to grapple with the written word. He voiced the opinion that although some teachers suggested that they understood his difficulties and said that they *'got mixed up sometimes,'* this was a ploy on their part to make him *'feel better'* because they did not *'know what it is really like. If they found it hard they wouldn't be a teacher.'*

Additionally, he reflected on some of the teachers whom he considered did in fact understand, but *'don't know what to do to make it easier.'* William acknowledged the importance of the help that his father had given him by spending time reading with him and said that his father had explained to him, *'what you read you often write somewhere. Once you do one thing you pick up on another quick.'* William was extremely sympathetic to those students who didn't *'have somebody or a family who know what it's like.'* He said that it must be difficult for a student who did not have someone who *'knew how to make it easier.'* William said that he had been disappointed by what he considered was a lack of understanding on the part of teachers and wanted a more sympathetic attitude and a moderation of practice to accommodate the difficulties he experienced.

'I just thought they'd sort of like understand a bit more and stuff like. I don't mean change the work but just explain it more and not say "here's a sheet now get on with it," but talk me through it.'

The lesson which I observed in Year 9 and was in the summer term and was part of a module which was taught by Mr. Tudor. It was the same lesson in which I observed Eleanor and there were fifteen students and a teaching assistant present. The theme of the lesson was the impact of powered flight on the twentieth century. Unlike the lesson observed in Year 8 William was not sitting at a desk which was close to Mr. Tudor's desk, but was sitting at a table with one other boy and three girls. The friend with whom he shared the supportive relationship was absent.

During the introduction to the lesson in which Mr. Tudor revisited the material which had been covered in the previous lessons on the topic William initially was engaged and looking at Mr. Tudor. However after two minutes he started whispering to one of the three girls at the table and Mr. Tudor said, *'Are you listening, guys?'* William then stopped whispering and turned once again to face Mr. Tudor. Mr. Tudor continued with his introduction and asked the students what implications there were in warfare for an aircraft crossing the channel. William was by now saying something to one of the girls and Mr. Tudor said *'William pay attention please.'* William stopped talking and turned again to face Mr. Tudor. After a few moments Mr. Tudor asked in which war aircraft were first used. One of the other boys said that it was the First World War. Mr. Tudor then moved on to discussing the impact upon warfare of the ability to cross the channel with aircraft and asked who had originally been involved in warfare and William answered *'the men who were fighting.'* Mr. Tudor said, *'yes, that's right and how would it be different now? Who would be involved now?'* William once again answered and said *'everybody.'* Mr. Tudor said, *'exactly. Well done.'*

Mr. Tudor then started the video and William began to talk again and Mr. Tudor said, *'Are you listening, William? It is ever so important that you listen. You will get more out of the lesson.'* William then sat completely quiet watching the video. During the first part of the video two of the girls at William's table started to talk and Mr. Tudor went over and asked them to stop. After a short time Mr. Tudor asked for which section of the community was the Ministry of Information Film made. William called out *'the people who lived back then.'* Mr. Tudor said, *'yes, well done, William and class what is it about?'* One of the boys said that it might be concerned with signing up, but William called out that the video was about *'the war and how to survive.'* Mr. Tudor said, *'great, now let's watch some more of it.'* For the remainder of the next section of the video William was completely silent and attentive. Mr. Tudor stopped the video and asked the class questions about the precautions which were necessary before and during an air raid. One of the questions was why should the loft in a house be cleared. William raised his hand and said, *'in case a bomb was dropped.'* Mr. Tudor said *'yes, that's right. Have any of you heard of an incendiary bomb?'* He then explained what the bomb was and its purpose.

Mr. Tudor then showed the rest of the video and during this time William remained attentive and watched the video quietly. At the end of the video Mr. Tudor asked the students how the public would know that there was going to be an air raid expecting the response to be about the sirens. William suggested that there was something called the *'eye in the sky,'* which British pilots who were patrolling used to send back a warning. Mr. Tudor said that this was a good suggestion and briefly explained the role and importance of Radar. He then reminded the class about the use of sirens.

A student asked about the visibility of a lighted cigarette in the blackout and Mr. Tudor went to the window raised and lowered the blinds to explain about the efficiency of the

blackout. He asked the students to get out their exercise books and to use a double page to make a table of the precautions that the public should take in the event of an air raid and should do this in two columns listed, 'Things you should do in the event of an air raid and things you should not do in the event of an air raid,' and to give five of each of these, thereby reducing the necessity of extensive writing and complex sentence construction and opening up practice for these students.

The other students were getting down to work but William sat there looking at the desk. After another minute Mr. Tudor said, '*come on, William get sorted out please,*' at which point William took out his exercise book and started to do the task. After two minutes Mr. Tudor asked for some examples. One student suggested that every family should build a shelter and William said '*do not let the lights show in the blackout.*' Mr. Tudor responded, '*well done. Now each of you write another four examples on each side of the table in your books.*' There was complete silence in the classroom and each student worked alone. After three minutes Mr. Tudor told the students that they had one minute to complete the task and went to a student who was having difficulty in completing the table. William continued to write.

At the end of the minute Mr. Tudor asked for feedback from the class. Some of the students raised their hands, but William continued writing. Although the bell rang for the end of the lesson Mr. Tudor continued with the lesson and waited for more suggestions for completion of the table. Several students offered answers, but William remained writing for another minute and then raised his hand and said '*the public should always carry a gas mask at all times.*' Mr. Tudor said that the students had done well in the lesson and told them to pack away. At the end of the lesson William left the class with the other boy who was sitting at his table.

William's active participation and contribution to the joint activity was high in this lesson and his responses, which were pertinent, indicated that he had enjoyed success in negotiating meaning with the subject matter. The work of completing the table did not demand extended writing skills and allowed William some measure of competence with the reification of History. However, his attention was easily distracted by the other students around the table and it was not difficult to speculate that other teachers who were not as sympathetic as Mr. Tudor towards his problems might interpret this behaviour as being disruptive.

When I interviewed William on the day following the lesson which was observed, he wanted to explain that his view of History had changed once again now that he was being taught by Mr. Tudor. He considered that not only had his liking of the subject increased and he would now place a stone representing this more positive perception in the second circle, but that his understanding had also improved and that he would place a stone to represent this in the first circle. William wanted to emphasise that this change had occurred because Mr. Tudor was *'a good teacher and helps everybody and reads stuff you don't understand, but Mr. Stuart just lets us get on with it.'* He also believed that Mr. Tudor's view of his understanding would also have increased and placed the stone to represent this in the second circle. William was also at pains to point out that he considered that his participation had increased since returning to lessons taught by Mr. Tudor. He said that he would place his class participation at two and his small group participation at one, because a friend of his was in the small group and he was allowed to sit with him in lessons.

William said that he had enjoyed the lesson of the previous day and had understood it all. He was able to remember the names of Orville and Wilbur Wright and the fact that the Queen Mother had been born just before their flight and had witnessed all the changes in

technology during the twentieth century. William started confidently to read the text from the lesson of the previous day but had great difficulty in articulating words such as 'provided' and 'material.' He was also able to recall all the key facts of the lesson such as the precautions necessary in an air raid and the importance of not stockpiling food and not using the telephone unnecessarily because '*if the government wanted to tell the news it would be engaged.*'

Although it had not been covered in the lesson I decided to see whether William could make some hypotheses as to why towns and cities were more likely to have been bombed than country areas. William initially said '*because there were lots of people.*' I accepted that this was the case but questioned what else might be sited in more populated areas he suggested that there might be factories there '*which made weapons and bombs.*' I agreed and then questioned him about the local area and why there was a possibility of its being bombed but despite some scaffolding on my part he was unable to identify the local dock areas as being important.

It was clear that William had generally paid attention in the lesson and, as he had revealed to Mr. Tudor he had '*taken in*' a great deal through watching the video and listening to and participating in the subsequent discussion. It was clear once again as in Year 8 that his difficulties with literacy would curtail his ability to demonstrate written evidence of his learning and would belie the extent of his understanding.

I discussed William's progress with Mr. Tudor one month later and by the time of this interview unfortunately William's absences had become even more frequent than when I interviewed him earlier, despite having the facility to spend time in the learning support centre. The Learning Support Tutor had spoken to me about William and the deterioration in his behaviour and had commented that an incident had occurred after

school in which there had been an altercation with a female student in which William had burned the girl's arm with a lighter causing '*a nasty wound.*'

Mr. Tudor said that he was disappointed at William's progress not only in History but also in school generally and voiced the opinion that William was '*holding on by the skin of his teeth.*' He considered that William's self esteem was very low and that no amount of support which Mr. Tudor tried to give him served to convince him that he could succeed. Mr. Tudor said that there was a '*massive difference*' in Year 9 not only in the work which William produced but also in his attention span.

'I can hold his interest for a short time but when it comes to actually getting on with work or actually going to any kind of task then the attention span is less than a minute on task, no matter how structured or broken down the work is.'

Mr. Tudor said that he had been successful in Year 8 in engaging with William and encouraging him to produce work which he considered as being the best which William could produce given the great difficulties he experienced with literacy. In contrast in Year 9 the work which William handed in did not '*come anywhere near that level,*' and was often unfinished and of such poor quality that Mr. Tudor was finding it difficult to award the National Curriculum level 4 which William had achieved in Year 8.

Mr. Tudor commented that he found it difficult to decide upon the extent of William's liking for History because William had been absent often and when he was at school did not appear to be very happy. He decided to place the stone representing William's liking of the subject in the fourth circle because this was '*a neutral place,*' and, while History did not appear to be a subject that William actively disliked, his present attitude towards anything to do with school led Mr. Tudor to suppose that no subject would necessarily create any real enthusiasm in William. Mr. Tudor voiced the opinion that William's verbal understanding was quite high and placed the stone representing this in the third

circle, but because the curriculum always demanded written evidence of competence this choice would always be modified

Mr. Tudor also voiced the opinion that William's participation had decreased since Year 8 and that he was a '*reluctant participant*' in class discussions and placed a stone representing this in the fifth circle. He considered that the amount that William participated in small group discussions was heavily dependent upon the support of the other students that sat with him,

'the right people would make a big difference, and I would place the stone then in the fourth circle, but if they were away then he would be completely out of it and in his own world and then the stone would have to be right out in the seventh circle.'

Mr. Tudor said that he considered that William was quite depressed and, because he had a good relationship with William and had been so concerned about William's lack of engagement and general behavioural problems which had been discussed in pastoral meetings, he asked William to wait after a lesson to discuss the situation with him.

William appeared happy to do this and Mr. Tudor asked him about the problems that he was now experiencing. William said '*I just can't seem to keep my mind on anything at the moment and I know that I am slipping. I don't want to be here.*' Mr. Tudor had tried to reassure him and explain that the teachers understood that William had difficulty in expressing himself on paper and that he should not give up. Despite Mr. Tudor's good intentions it is likely that his assurances would only have impacted marginally upon William given his perception that the teaching staff did not understand his difficulties and either were unsympathetic to them or were unaware of what measures should be taken to improve the situation. Mr. Tudor, however, ended our discussions by remarking that he felt that the school would have '*done remarkably well if it were able to keep William on board at Key Stage 4.*'

The alienation which William suffered in Year 8 had increased by Year 9 and his already minimal sense of agency in the arena of school diminished in proportion to this. His progressively diminishing participation in those communities in school where demands for proficiency in literacy reduced the possibility of diversity of practice led to his increasing detachment from Cullishaven School. His lack of a sense of belonging to any community in school, other than schooled Mathematics, negated any alignment or engagement with the educational aims of the arena of school. The identity which had been attributed to him had developed from being a student with special educational needs to one who was labelled as having behavioural problems. He displayed a lack of confidence in a system which had largely failed to ensure provision for the difficulties he experienced and felt impotent to improve his own situation, except with recourse to his family.

CHAPTER 9

Reflections

This thesis and the research involved in it can best be described as a journey which is still ongoing for me. The architects of this journey, largely unknown to me at the beginning, developed what had seemed initially to be a straightforward passage into a compelling and diverse adventure, changing not only the research itself but also me in the process. Although I was aware of the work of Vygotsky and had utilised his theories in my classrooms I was ignorant of the work of later socioculturalists who had built upon his ideas. It was only after I had studied the works of Lave (1988), Lave and Wenger (1991), Rogoff (1990; 1995) and Wenger (1998) that I realised that this provided a framework which would enable me to consider the situation of the students in an entirely different way and to structure the research instruments accordingly. My later reading of Griffiths (1995; 2005) and the synthesis of this work together with my earlier reading refined my analysis and interpretation of the very rich data obtained.

Lave's notion of arena and settings enabled me to consider the organisation of school in different ways and to view Wenger's idea of a community of practice as the meeting point between the arena and settings within it. It was also from the work of socioculturalists generally, but Wenger (1998) particularly which emphasises the dynamic between context, participation, learning and transformation of identity, which alerted me to the fluid nature of these constituents in the learning process and the fact that each of these would be experienced differently by individuals in emergent settings within school.

In this chapter I

- review the findings of the research and its implications
- consider the possible contribution to knowledge that the research makes

- critically reflect upon the work
- consider possible future work

Reviewing the findings of the research and its implications

This research has considered four students from four very different backgrounds and their participation and learning in National Curriculum History at Key Stage 3. The only commonalities which they have are that they all experienced difficulties with literacy, they had all achieved a level 3 on their Key Stage 2 Standardised Assessment Tests, they were all in Years 8 and 9 when the research was conducted and they all attended the same school. They were all labelled as students experiencing difficulties with literacy, but were on different stages of the school's register of special educational needs and all differed in their responses to the labels which had been attributed to them. The activities which they undertook outside school and the relationships which they forged, both within the arena of school and outside, contributed to the emergent identities which they brought to the dynamic settings in each subject area.

I have decided to consider the findings of the research from the perspective of there being two factors which are given. The first, the difficulties which the students experience with literacy, may differ from student to student but will affect their learning, but may improve given sufficient material resources, sufficient time and supportive learning contexts. The second is that of the National Curriculum, which is outside the control of the students and is immutable unless renegotiated nationally. Teachers are constrained, to a large extent, by expectations from the social order and the arena of school, in the diversity of how they are able to interpret the National Curriculum. This chapter considers the findings of the research in relation to these two factors and the influences both within settings and outside that affect either positively or adversely the impact of these factors on the students who are the participants in this research.

Although only Mathilda had been classified specifically as experiencing dyslexia it was apparent from the reading which the students undertook in the interviews after the observed lessons in Year 8 that all found reading extremely difficult. None of them was able to read fluently and took time to deconstruct the words, thus losing the flow and continuity of the text and only Eleanor had shown a significant improvement in her reading in Year 9. Wenger (1998) argues that there is a complementarity between participation and reification and that reification is a process in any practice which *'creates points of focus around which negotiation of meaning becomes organised'* (p.58). These points of focus could be stories, terms or concepts etc. *'which reify something of that practice in congealed form'* (p.59). It was clear for all the students that engagement with the process of reification and therefore the points of focus i.e. the textual reifications of History and its discourse was severely limited due to their problems with literacy, but that their participation was also curtailed sometimes due to other factors.

Although all the students read some material in their leisure time this tended to centre mainly on their outside interests, animals for Eleanor, equestrian pursuits for Mathilda, military books for William and books about television programmes for Henry. Only Eleanor used the school library on a regular basis and occasionally used the public library for research for school work. None of them chose to read about History either because it was too difficult for them or because it did not interest them. Neither, did they watch many television programmes concerned with History and any support about the subject which they might have gained, through these two media, to compensate for their difficulties with the academic text, was severely curtailed. All subjects which were heavily language based clearly posed a problem and the power exercised by the curriculum to demand written evidence of understanding severely militated against these

students experiencing a sense of belonging attributable to competence in many subject communities.

The research has revealed that the relationships in which the students were embedded both within school and outside have the greatest impact on their sense of belonging and therefore their participation and their learning, beneficially or adversely. The relationships with teachers and the influence of teachers, and the ways in which they open up practice to legitimate students' participation and create a sense of belonging in a community of learners is important, but so too is the influence of peers. I argue in this research that peers play a powerful role in extending participation and legitimation to students with special educational needs, helping to construct a context in which students are able to align with the joint practice of the community and thereby experience a sense of belonging. A sociocultural view of learning sees self as relational.

'The term learning simply glosses that some persons have achieved a particular relationship with each other, and it is in terms of these relations that information necessary to everyone's participation gets made available in ways that give people enough time on task to get good at what they do'

(McDermott, 1996 p.277)

These relationships did not necessarily impact in the same way for each student, neither did they all either individually or cumulatively result in the same reactions from the students. Although these relationships will be considered separately, they are interdependent and must not be seen as acting autonomously but as interconnecting strands of a web of influences which irrevocably affect and construct the identities of these learners for good or ill.

Each of the students enjoyed an identity of competence in curriculum areas, such as Art, Drama, Physical Education and Craft, Design and Technology in which less emphasis

was placed upon literary skills and in which they could not only align with their peers in the joint enterprise, but also engage with the practices and tools of the various communities. Additionally, although Eleanor enjoyed Art she was also able to engage with the discourse of Religious Education due, in no small part, to her participation, relationships and sense of belonging which she enjoyed in her church community and the identity from this which she brought into school.

The attitudes which the students displayed towards their relationships with teaching staff in the subjects, which were discussed in the interviews, were influenced strongly by the practices of the staff, the extent to which they tailored their strategies to open up practice for the students and the help which was available either from teachers or support staff. The amount of this help was clearly differentiated by the funding which was allocated outside the arena but which was deployed by senior management to the constellations of practice within the arena, favouring core subjects such as Mathematics and English while disadvantaging the Humanities Faculty.

The relationships with teachers were also a strong moderating factor in the students' responses to their experiences in different ability groupings. Findings from previous research have been inconclusive about the reactions of students to different types of ability groupings and there appears to be little consensus about the efficiency and effects on students of either mixed ability or setted organisation. The students in this research also differed in their opinions about both the mixed ability grouping in Year 8 and the Foundation group in Year 9 in Humanities with William and Henry being broadly supportive. Only Mathilda was completely opposed to the idea of the Foundation group, with Eleanor showing reserved support for the organisation, the reservation being based on the fact that some of her friends were in other groups. Mathilda's negative reaction centred more upon her perception of negative labelling which she construed as being

attributed to the students by the process of being placed in a setted situation. William's enthusiasm for the Foundation group was tempered by his internal dialogue that if he experienced difficulties with the complexities of the subject he was '*the bottom of the bottom group.*' Once again, however, the views of the students, with the exception of Eleanor, were coloured by the very differing teaching strategies of Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart.

Eleanor, in marked contrast to Henry, William and Mathilda did not comment about other teachers generally. It is difficult to discern the reason for this. There is the possibility that she did not attribute any part of her difficulties to the teachers and their practice, but there is also the possibility that with her religious views she did not feel comfortable criticising those whom she considered to be in positions of authority. Henry, William and Mathilda clearly perceived Mr. Tudor, both in Years 8 and 9, as being a more sympathetic and reflective teacher and appreciated his efforts to organise his lessons and materials to accommodate their needs, to make lessons 'fun' and acknowledge their work, thereby motivating them to further efforts. Eleanor did not make any comments about the practices of Mr. Stuart. However, the other three students all commented negatively on Mr. Stuart's teaching approaches, with William explaining that sometimes these destroyed any sense of belonging and he felt that he '*was not supposed to sort of be there.*' Their perception was that he made little adjustment to his practice in lessons in the Foundation group which had ostensibly been established to enable a wider diversity of practice, while Mr. Stuart himself admitted that he often used language which was '*at quite a high level.*' Many teachers are not given opportunities to reflect on their beliefs about children and Mr. Stuart locates deficit in children. This is a representation from a model of mind embedded in the medical models, which are a cultural legacy, that at the level of the social order denote a taken for granted belief about children. These ideas mediate teachers' practice and Mr. Stuart would not necessarily have reason to change his

practice if his belief is that these students are unable to study History at the same level as their peers.

The distribution of funding to enable a higher staff/student ratio in Mathematics lessons was an important factor in the very positive perception of students towards this subject and its organisation. All students commented on the high quality of the relationships between staff and students and, with the exception of Eleanor, all felt a pronounced sense of belonging within the setted grouping. Mathilda did not comment on any negative connotations of being placed in this organisational structure where the students were '*all the same*' as she had done when discussing Humanities, but emphasised that her enjoyment and understanding of the subject were enhanced when one particular teacher was present. For Mathilda, William and Henry the reifications of the subject were easier to negotiate. There is also the possibility that the nature of Mathematics enables the negotiation of meaning without the lengthy discourse involved in a subject such as History. Not only did the students feel that they were able to align with other students, who were '*the same or a little bit higher,*' but they could enjoy an identity of competence in a subject which was not totally dependent on a high degree of literacy, but also in which there were greater opportunities for individual attention.

Despite Mathilda expressing support for the setted organisation in Mathematics she generally favoured mixed ability grouping where she considered that it was more beneficial to be in a teaching group in which there were people who '*know what they are talking about.*' This was particularly appropriate in English lessons which she generally enjoyed. For William, Henry and Eleanor, however this was not the case and it was in lessons such as these, where the difficulties which they experienced with literacy were most evident, that they suffered the most discomfort and sense of isolation. This was

due largely not to the strategies of the teacher, but to the unequal power balance in the relationships with their peers.

Mathilda was a popular student, with a coherent sense of self and an identity of competence appropriated from lessons such as P.E. and Drama and the activities outside school which she undertook with the hunting community. She was part of and enjoyed a wider circle of supportive friends within school than did the other three students. I suggest that it was this network of relationships which not only supported Mathilda but also deterred peers from displaying the negative reactions which they accorded to Eleanor, William and Henry and from which they suffered so acutely. Their identities as students who were labelled as having difficulties were carried from setting to setting and, in those settings in which there were students who were not labelled as such, there was an audience, not always sympathetic to their situation or willing to offer access to the joint enterprise. Despite the intentions of staff to foster inclusivity in principle it was not always realised in practice in those communities in which fellow students exerted power to curtail diversity.

The relationships which the students enjoyed outside school were also very significant factors in the construction of the identities which were brought into school. William's relationship with his father and the support he gave William in his reading increased William's confidence sufficiently to enable him to help his father with some of the programmes on hospital radio. This experience threw into sharp contrast what William perceived as a lack of support from the arena of school for the difficulties he experienced with literacy. Although there had been disruption in Mathilda's family her relationship with her mother and siblings continued to provide her with an identity as an important member of the community, an identity which she did not enjoy in academic settings in school.

In Year 9 the changes in the working practices of Henry's parents strengthened the bonds between family members and provided Henry with greater support with those areas of homework which he found difficult. The existing strong family structure and the support for schoolwork which Eleanor had always received from her mother continued and the joint commitment to church reinforced the bonds of the relationships within the family. Perhaps one of the most significant factors impacting on the relationship which the students experienced with school, and their attitude towards it, were the relationships which the students enjoyed in the organisations to which they belonged outside school. Although there were similarities there was also strong divergence between the results of these relationships and the membership which the students enjoyed in those communities of practice.

William, Mathilda and Eleanor all belonged to organisations in which there was a clear structural pattern in which they participated regularly, had a definite identity of membership with an accepted place, and for which they all articulated a strong sense of belonging. The communities in which Henry participated outside school were loosely organized friendship groups whose joint interest was sport orientated and, although Henry participated in these on a regular basis, his sense of belonging was not consistent and existed only '*some of the time.*'

Eleanor's membership and continued attendance at church enabled her to be part of a community whose shared beliefs and support system gave her a sense of belonging and provided a counterweight to the isolation which she experienced in Year 8 and continued to underpin her academic efforts throughout Year 9 as her confidence and sense of competence increased. William's membership of the Territorial Army endowed him with a sense of being part a community in which competence was not judged solely on success with literacy and in which members were expected to be mutually supportive.

The very strong sense of belonging which William experienced in this community, together with the support which he received from his father, unfortunately did nothing to improve his alignment with the arena of school and its settings in which he perceived little with which he could identify and much from which he was alienated.

Mathilda enjoyed membership of the horse-riding and hunting fraternity. She enjoyed an identity of competence within the community and alignment to its practices and looked forward to the very strong probability of a career within it. This commitment to an outside interest, together with what she perceived as being a system which provided a largely irrelevant curriculum on which she was to be tested by measures with which she had great difficulty, only succeeded in fracturing further an already tenuous identification with school. Henry emerges as perhaps the most troubling participant in this research. Although he enjoyed a progressively supportive family structure his lack of strong identification with any outside community, which could provide a supportive role and act as a moderating influence on the very negative aspects of his school career, raises very real concerns about communities in which he might participate and learning trajectories which may prove attractive to him in future.

The findings of the research raise several issues and implications at the levels of the social order, arena and settings. As discussed in Chapter 2 the National Curriculum can be seen as a product of a system which considers education not as an end in itself, but as a tool for increasing the value of students in a market-driven economy. The National Curriculum is based on a symbol-processing model of knowledge which is imposed by government outside the arena of school and, despite efforts by staff to interpret it sympathetically for students such as those participating in this research, continues to require a written representation of evidence of understanding in Key Stage tests and national examinations. This leads not only to a lack of diversity in the curriculum

provided for these students, but also in what is required of them and establishes a 'relationship of unequals' between these students and the curriculum.

In subjects where a high degree of literacy is required to demonstrate competence the students in this research enjoyed little agency, and power was maintained by the curriculum, in whatever way it was interpreted by teachers, with only occasional power enjoyed by the students to negotiate and take ownership of meaning. This engendered a fear of failure in Eleanor, Henry and William and was overtly expressed by Henry and William.

The demand that each student in the secondary sector should learn a foreign language impacted strongly on these students who struggled with texts generally and were therefore disadvantaged in attempting and failing to engage with the discourse of the subject. This problem was voiced particularly by William whose identity of competence was severely compromised by his inability to grasp spellings in English lessons and who found the complexities of German confusing and a complete anathema.

The debate over setting by ability continues and this research argues that there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Although mixed ability grouping moves some way to removing the label which is so often attributed to students who have special educational needs, little benefit can be accrued from this type of organisation, or from grouping by ability if the pedagogy is not appropriate. It is very clear that teachers' practice strongly mediates student experiences. Mr. Tudor made concerted attempts to open up practice to enable greater participation for the students and was successful in many areas. However, he was constrained by the effects of how funding was distributed and factors from the social order which dictated the amount of material which had to be included in each lesson. Despite Mr. Stuart's efforts to tailor his practice to accommodate the needs of the students, it emerged that his philosophy was centred upon a teaching curriculum, rather

than a learning curriculum (Lave and Wenger 1991) and difficulties in implementing this were attributed by him to the students. The role of teaching assistants is very significant through the eyes of the students and this role needs to be twofold, that of helping with students with special educational needs generally, but also with the specialist discourse of each subject area.

Factors from the social order impacting on the arena of school and thence to the Humanities Faculty negatively influenced the possibility of the students' engagement with the subject. The excessive content which was included in many of the lessons did not allow students either sufficient time to listen and digest information or to have the necessary time to reflect. Their difficulties with literacy meant that they took longer to write information which could have enabled them to negotiate meaning with the subject at home. All the students articulated very eloquently their need to hear others and not to have that curtailed by teachers interpreting and projecting collective meaning. The students needed to hear how other students made meanings in the same tasks that they faced. It is possible that teachers misconstrued their needs to listen, and take time for reflection and involvement in the process of reification, as disengagement. What teachers may have interpreted as disaffection may, in fact, have been the students struggling to make sense of the projected meanings written on the board.

The framework of accountability for schools is becoming increasingly entrenched. Initiatives such as the National Literacy Strategy (DfES 1999), the National Numeracy Strategy (DfES 1999) the Key Stage 3 National Strategy (DfES 2003) and Personalised Learning (2007), which have emerged since the critiques described in Chapter 2, have further marginalised teachers' agency and emphasised pedagogy as a set of methods which will be suitable for all students. These initiatives and the rhetoric supporting them

are counter to the findings of this research which indicates that it is not possible or desirable to homogenise pedagogy, which these initiatives seek to do.

Sociocultural theory emphasises the validity of the relational self and not the individual self and initiatives such as 'personalised learning' fail to recognise that learning takes place in a participatory framework. Students such as those in the research need to be enabled to participate more and inform each other in ways that legitimise.

Existing models of assessment imposed from the social order and interpreted by the arena of school do not allow for the type of assessment which would enable these students to experience an identity of competence. I argue that the achievements of these students were underestimated and that sociocultural methods of assessment involving interaction and negotiation would reveal achievements which were more commensurate with their ability. To implement measures which would improve the system for these students would involve a change in mindset at the level of the social order, arena and setting and implies a risk not only for students, but also parents and schools in the present climate of accountability.

There is a need for adequate funding at the social order level and distributed at the arena level to provide for more teachers and ancillary staff, enabling students to be taught either in smaller classes or smaller groups within classes. These smaller groups would then be able to take advantage of specialist dialogic teaching and more extensive collaboration. With additional funding more could be done at the arena level to recognise the difficulties which the students experience and to filter the necessary revenue to the constellations of practice within the school.

The initial focus of this research had been to consider students' perceptions of their experiences in the History classroom. History, however, became the device by which I

became acquainted with four special students and the lens through which I considered the complexities of their lives within the arena of school and the settings which they helped to construct. As a researcher, but also as a teacher, I had hoped that the picture painted by this research would have been positive and encouraging. However the findings are singularly disappointing and point to an education system which fails many of its most vulnerable participants in ways which are largely avoidable.

What contribution to knowledge has this research made?

Methodologically the research has shown the power of a sociocultural perspective in bringing lived experiences of individuals to light and the mediational processes that help to understand them. Later work by Hallam and Ireson (2006) (Secondary school students' preferences for different types of structured grouping practices) has extended earlier work and has included more qualitative questions in the data collection. There may be possibilities for collaboration with researchers undertaking this type of work to use a sociocultural framework and its attendant methods to open up and illuminate the complexities of the embedded world of the student.

The way in which the projective technique of the 'Talking Stones' was used has illustrated that this is a technique which engages relationally, and is not a technique which can be used objectively. The research has clearly shown that this technique should only be used by interviewers who are aware of its potency and recognise its ethical implications. The research has also shown that this technique, when used properly, is able to connect the interviewer with the life of those being interviewed and, as such, it is important to honour the private feelings which they do not wish to expose. To ensure this protection it is important that control is given to those being interviewed to respond only to those questions with which they feel safe and to answer in ways which they consider appropriate.

This research has gone some way to rectifying the situation, as expressed by Chappell et al. (1991), that research has paid insufficient attention to the situation of those with learning difficulties compared to that undertaken with those who are ordinarily disabled and has extended the use of the projective technique to illumine the world of those with difficulties with literacy. This research has attempted to give a voice in a more comprehensive way to those whose needs are often unheard.

It has contributed to the work on inclusion in a different way and has indicated that there is no 'one-size fits all' model. It has emphasised that relationships are key to learning, for every learner, but particularly for those who experience difficulties, but that material resources to construct and support these relationships are equally important. It also re-emphasises that events both at school and outside are interconnected in their impact on a student's learning. It has considered areas in which students with learning difficulties are able to experience competence and identify and align with subject matter thus contributing positively to the construction of identity. It has also considered the interaction between factors operating at different levels, that is the arena, settings and the interpersonal experiences within these, and demonstrated that the formation of self-hood is constructed from multiple identities which are affected by diverse factors in the lives of students.

One outstanding point it has raised is that the organisational model, whilst highlighting significant issues, such as the differences that a teacher can make, fails to capture the difficulties they experience, through their being controlled by policy directives from the level of the social order, in trying to effect improvements. Three of the students testify to teachers making a difference. These teachers understood the students as knowledgeable and thinkers (Bruner, 1996) with the right and ability to negotiate meaning and to belong and become increasingly competent. The teachers therefore took

the students' limitation as limitations of experience rather than ability and understood that they had to address these in engaging the students in the tools of the community of their subjects.

Critical reflection of the work

In a sociocultural view understanding the situation of those students who are labelled as having special educational needs requires a consideration of those who are not labelled as such. There is a duality inherent in the labelling. This research was a study in depth, but not breadth and a more comparative study of students with special educational needs and those without would have provided a more comprehensive view of the influences which impact on individual learning. It would also have revealed the access to History available outside school and the effects this had on the attitudes of the other students to the subject. Certainly difficulties with literacy constrained the engagement of the students in this research with the reifications of the subject such as the concepts, terms, procedures etc. and the process of reification where they negotiate projected meanings and are required to project their own. The reliance of the arena on written forms of forms of representations of meaning reflecting the mediation of national assessment policy and practice further exacerbates the children's marginalisation from practice in History.

The original intention had been to undertake a comparative study and the data had been collected but the constraints of time on the research prohibited analysing this. However I do not regret the approach that I adopted. Although the sample was limited, it enabled me to consider the different experiences of the students over a two year period in two different situations and to pay attention to the factors outside school which, together with their experiences in school, contribute to the formation of identity and the ongoing process of reconciliation within this which takes place in the different communities of

which they are members. Constructing the narrative through the eyes of the students gave power to their voices and allowed me access not only to the events which happen in the settings, but, more importantly, their construction of these.

The subject of History was the starting place for the investigation, but given the knowledge that identities are carried from one setting to another, more extensive attention could have been paid to other subjects, such as Mathematics and English, and particularly those subjects such as Physical Education, Art, Drama and Craft, Design and Technology in which practice is not solely dictated by competence in literacy. Given more time and agreement with other staff, students could have been observed in these lessons and teachers interviewed about understanding, participation etc. This would have changed the nature of the research, but would have provided a more rounded and possibly more compelling picture of students who experience these difficulties and what this means for their lives at school.

The two questionnaires were completed in one lesson in each year and on reflection this may not have given sufficient time for reflection by the students. It was also clear that each of the initial interviews in Years 8 and 9 were constrained by being undertaken in one lesson, and I was aware of the pressure to complete the questions in the allotted time. Although rich thick data was revealed a longer period may well have been even more beneficial.

One lesson was observed in each of Years 8 and 9. I now consider that this was probably insufficient to form a satisfactory picture of the participation of the students in the settings of the History classroom, allowing for the fact that the settings which they experience are dynamic and changing from lesson to lesson. It would have been useful to have viewed them on at least two occasions in each year. Just using observation in

Mr. Stuart's classroom without the benefit of video or tape recorder meant that I was unable to revisit the material in the same way as that of the videoed lessons and consider students' and teacher's body language for example.

Finally, to provide greater triangulation it would have been useful to interview both teachers about each of the students in Year 8 and 9, given that they had both taught them due to the modular approach. However due to limitation of time and also Mr. Stuart's discomfort with the technique of the 'talking stones' this was not possible.

Possible future work

Clearly much more work needs to be undertaken following other students like those in this research to identify successful practice which extends participation and legitimization, particularly for students such as William and Henry for whom the experience of school was one of loss. A slight change of focus but still concentrating on those students who experience difficulties with literacy could provide useful information. This change of focus could extend the scope of the research from a study of the experiences of students with difficulties with literacy over two years to one which considered their experiences throughout their school career. Alternatively the time span could be altered to consider students from Key Stage 3 up to and including further educational, vocational courses or work based learning. The education system generally and schools in particular should be monitoring students such as those on the project. Without this it is impossible to assess the impact of school in the long term on the students.

Wearmouth (2000) has already used the Talking Stones Technique with adults. Use of this technique could provide useful information about adults with difficulties with literacy on adult literacy programmes to provide a comparison of their experiences, their

learning trajectories and development of identity before, during and after their time on the programme.

Finally dissemination of this research is necessary. Teachers such as those who made such a positive impact on the students need an insight into these stories to encourage them to continue to create pedagogic spaces for students to listen to each other and engage in the process of reification. To do this they need support that is not a simplistic choice of making groups large or small, but as Lave (1988) suggests, to see the world and the structuring resources made available in settings through the eyes of the learners, those who view school and many of its subjects like History from the periphery. I do not underestimate the problems of mediation of practice at the social and institutional level, but argue that if these views from the periphery (Murphy, 2008) are made available then teachers can and would be able to make more difference to the experiences of students such as these.

APPENDIX A

Biographical Questionnaire for Pilot Study

1. Do you join in any lunch-time or after school activities run by the school?

2. How many hours each day do you normally spend doing homework?

A. I am not usually given homework

B. Half an hour or less

C. About one hour

D. About one and a half hours

E. About 2 hours

F. over 2 hours

3. How many hours each day do you watch t.v. or videos?

A. 0-1 hour

B. 1-2 hours

C. 2-3 hours

D. 3-4 hours

E. 4-5 hours

F. Over 5 hours

4. Which sort of t.v. programmes do you usually watch?

5. Do you watch any programmes that are to do with History, such as
Timewatch/Meet the Ancestors or historical costume drama such as Pride and
Prejudice, Great Expectations?

6. Do your parents read a newspaper? Yes No (circle your answer)

7. If the answer is yes which newspaper is it?

8. Do you read any particular magazine regularly? Yes No.

9. If yes, which magazine or magazines are they?

10. Do you read books apart from those that you have to read for school?

Yes No

11. If yes, which sort of books do you enjoy reading?

12. Do you ever read any historical stories or non-fiction books? Yes No

13. If yes, which books are they?

14. How often do you go to the cinema?

A Once a week

B. Once or twice a month

C. Less than once a month

15. What sort of films do you enjoy?

16. Do you ever see any films which have to do with History? Yes No

APPENDIX B

Biographical Questionnaire Year 8 and Year 9

Name..... Form.....

1. Do you join in any lunch-time or after school activities run by the school?

(Circle your answer)

Yes No

2. If the answer is yes what are the activities?

3. Which hobbies do you have when you are not at school? This could be after school during the week or at week-ends or holidays.

4. How many hours each day do you normally spend doing homework?

(Tick one of the following answers)

- A. I am not usually given homework
- B. Half an hour or less
- C. About one hour
- D. About one and a half hours
- E. About 2 hours
- F. Over two hours

5. How many hours each day do you watch t.v. or videos?

(Tick one of the following answers)

- A. Up to one hour

- B. Up to two hours
- C. Up to three hours
- D. Up to four hours
- E. More than four hours

6. Which sort of t.v. programmes do you usually watch?

7. Do you watch any programmes that are to do with History, such as Timewatch/Meet the ancestors/The Time Team or historical costume drama such as Pride and Prejudice/ Great Expectations? (Circle your answer)

Yes No

8. If your answer was yes which programmes do you watch?

9. Do you or your parents read a newspaper? (Circle your answer) Yes No

10. If the answer is yes, which news paper is it?

11. Do you read any particular magazine regularly? (Circle your answer) Yes No

12. If the answer is yes, which magazine or magazines are they?

13. Do you read any books apart from those that you have to read for school?

(Circle your answer) Yes No

14. If the answer is yes, which sort of books do you enjoy reading?

15. Do you ever buy any books? (Circle your answer) Yes No

16. Do other people ever buy books for you as presents?

(Circle your answer) Yes No

17. Do you have a ticket for the library at school? (Circle your answer) Yes No

18. If the answer is yes, how often do you use it? (Tick one of the following)

- A. Every week
- B. Once every two weeks
- C. Once a month
- D. Sometimes, but not regularly
- E. Hardly ever

19. Do you have a ticket for the public library? (Circle your answer) Yes No

20. If the answer is yes, how often do you use it? (Tick one of the following)

- A. Every week
- B. Once every two weeks
- C. Once a month

- D. Sometimes, but not regularly
- E. Hardly ever

21. Do you ever read any historical stories or non-fiction books?

(Circle your answer) Yes No

22. If your answer is yes what are the books you are reading or have read?

23. How often do you go to the cinema?

(Tick one of the following)

- A. Once a week or more
- B. Once or twice a month
- C. Less than once a month

24. What sort of films do you enjoy?

25. Do you ever see any films which are to do with History?

(Circle your answer) Yes No

26. If your answer is yes, which films have you seen which were to do with History?

APPENDIX C

Preferred Learning Styles Questionnaire for Pilot Study

This first section deals with your ideas about the various teaching and learning activities which might happen during lessons.

Make a note on a scale of 1-10 how much you enjoy the activities listed below. Do not think too long about this. Make your response from your gut feeling! Number 1 will mean that you dislike the activity intensely, while 10 will be enjoying it very much. So the range of 1-5 will be from No.1 "Oh no, I can't stand that" to No.5 "I don't have any feelings about it either way." The range of 6-10 will be from No.6 "Yes it's okay" to No.10 "I really enjoy that activity."

Discussions

Reporting back sessions

Role Play

Note-taking from books

Note-taking from the board

Note-taking from an OHP

Research projects

Teacher-led question and answer sessions	.....
Dictation	.....
Videos	.....
Quizzes	.....
Tests	.....
Practical work	.....
Writing imaginative essays	.....
Writing factual essays	.....
Using facts and figures	.....
Working with maps	.....
Drawing maps	.....
Drawing diagrams	.....
Making graphs	.....
Using primary and secondary sources	.....

Sorting information into cause and effect

Section 2

This section deals with Humanities subjects. Take longer to think about this section when you answer. Using the same scale as in Section 1, give your opinions about the subjects you have studied in Humanities in Years 7 to 9. In addition put down whether you think the time spent on the topics was too short, about right, too long. So an answer might look as follows;

The Twentieth Century 7 About right

History **Too short** **About right** **Too long**

The Romans

Medieval Relams

Native Americans

The Expansion of Trade

And Industry

The Twentieth Century

The Making of the U.K.

Geography

Industry and China Clay

O.S. Maps

Norfolk Broads

Planet Earth

Rivers

USA

Ecosystems

Deserts

Tropical Rainforests

Earthquakes

Volcanoes

Europe and Italy

Economic Development Project

Brazil

Weather

U.K.

R.E.

Pilgrimage

Marriage

Growing Up

Buddhism

The Christian Church

Christianity

Judaism

World Religions

APPENDIX D

Preferred Learning Styles – Questionnaire for Year 8

This first section deals with your ideas about the various teaching and learning activities which might happen during lessons.

Make a note on a scale of 1-10 how much you enjoy the activities listed below. Do not think too long about this. Make your response from your gut feeling! Number 1 will mean that you dislike the activity intensely, while 10 will be enjoying it very much. So the range of 1-5 will be from No.1 “Oh no, I can’t stand that” to No.5 “I don’t have any feelings about it either way.” The range of 6-10 will be from No.6 “Yes it’s okay” to No.10 “I really enjoy that activity.”

Discussions	.....
Reporting back sessions	.....
Role Play	.....
Note-taking from books	.....
Note-taking from the board	.....
Note-taking from an OHP	.....
Research projects	.....

Teacher-led question and answer sessions	.....
Dictation	.....
Videos	.....
Quizzes	.....
Tests	.....
Practical work	.....
Writing imaginative essays	.....
Writing factual essays	.....
Using facts and figures	.....
Working with maps	.....
Drawing maps	.....
Drawing diagrams	.....
Making graphs	.....
Using primary and secondary sources	.....

Sorting information into cause and effect

The five items in this section require you to think more carefully

Still grade them from 1-10 as before but take a little while to think about your answer

*Working on your own in class

*Working with one other person in class

*Working with a group in class

*Working on your own at home

*Working in the library at school

Section 2 The next section asks you to list on a scale of 1-10 how much you have enjoyed the work involved in the Humanities subjects

History

The Romans

Medieval Realms

The Making of the U.K.

Geography

Mapwork	.....
Using an atlas	.....
Living in hot deserts	.....
Living in cold places	.....
Living in wet places	.....
Weather	.....
Earthquakes	.....
Volcanoes	.....
Italy	.....
Brazil	.....
<u>R.E.</u>	
Creations Myths	.....
Ultimate Questions	.....

Facts about world religions

Judaism

Islam

The Christian Church

3. What is your favourite subject in the whole curriculum and why?

APPENDIX E

Preferred Learning Styles - Questionnaire for Year 9

Name.....Form.....

1. This first section deals with your ideas about the various teaching and learning activities which might happen during lessons.

Make a note on a scale of 1-10 of how much you enjoy the activities listed below. Do not think too long about this. Make your response from your gut feeling! Number 1 will mean that you dislike the activity intensely, while 10 will be enjoying it very much. So the range of 1-5 will be from No.1 "Oh no, I can't stand that" to No.5 "I don't really have any feelings about it either way". The range of 6-10 will be from No.6. "Yes it's okay" to No.10 "I really enjoy that activity".

Discussions

Reporting back sessions

Role Play

Note-taking from books

Note-taking from the board

Note-taking from an OHP

Research projects	.....
Teacher-led question and answer sessions	.....
Dictation	.....
Videos	.....
Quizzes	.....
Tests	.....
Practical work	.....
Writing imaginative essays	.....
Writing factual essays	.....
Using facts and figures	.....
Working with maps	.....
Drawing maps	.....
Drawing diagrams	.....
Making graphs	.....

Using primary and secondary sources

Sorting information into cause
and effect

The five items in this section require you to think more carefully.

Still grade them from 1-10 as before but take a little while to think about your answer

*Working on your own in class

*Working with one other person in class

*Working with a group in class

*Working on your own at home

*Working in the library at school

2. The next section asks you to list on a scale of 1-10 how much you enjoyed the work involved in the Humanities Subjects.

History

The Romans

Medieval Realms

The Making of the UK

Write down the topics that you
have covered so far in Year 9 and give
them a mark

.....

.....

Geography

Mapwork

Using an atlas

Living in hot deserts

Living in cold places

Living in wet places

Weather

Earthquakes

Volcanoes

Italy

Brazil

Write down the topics you have

Covered so far in Year 9 and give them a mark

.....

.....

RE

Creation Myths

Ultimate questions

Facts about world religions

Judaism

Islam

The Christian Church

Write down the topics that you have
covered so far in Year 9 and give them a mark

.....

.....

Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 are very important for the research so please think carefully
about them.

3. Have you enjoyed the lessons in Humanities more in Year 9 than you did in Year 8 or
less? (Circle your answer) More Less
4. Can you give a reason for your answer?
5. Are you going to be taking History as an option subject?
(Circle your answer) Yes No
6. Will you please give a reason for your answer.

7. Which is your favourite subject in the whole school curriculum?
8. What is it about that particular subject that makes you like it?

APPENDIX F

Carrying out the research

Pilot Study

Year 1 of Research - 1999

Second half of Spring Term

Access gained into Cullishaven School

Discussion with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and staff of Humanities Faculty about organisation of Year 9 lessons

First half of Summer Term

Observation of 7 students in pilot Study in Foundation group

Administering questionnaire to Students in pilot study

Interviews with staff about rationale for setting

Interviews with students on pilot study

Analysing data and refining Questionnaires

Main Study

Year 1 of Research – 1999

Second half of Summer Term

Interviews with staff about success and failures of ability grouping and plans for following year

Year 2 of Research – 2000

Students in Year 8 mixed ability grouping

First half of Spring Term

History lessons attended and research explained to all students in Year 8 classes

Questionnaires administered and analysed

Letter distributed to 32 students

	Interviews with Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart
	12 of 32 students interviewed including Mathilda
Second half of Spring Term	Remaining 20 students interviewed including Henry, William and Eleanor
First half of Summer Term	Observation of lessons and videos recorded including observation of lesson with William in Mr. Tudor's class on poverty in England in 17 th century and the Beggars of Bristol
	Interview with William on understanding of lesson Observation of lesson with Eleanor in Mr. Tudor's class on the Industrial Revolution and the comparison of Manchester between 1700 and 1850
	Interview with Eleanor on understanding of lesson
	Observation of lesson with Mathilda and Henry in Mr. Tudor's class on the Industrial Revolution and the comparison of Manchester between 1700 and 1850
	Interviews with Mathilda and Henry on understanding of lesson
	Other 8 students also interviewed during this period
Second half of Summer Term	Interviews with Mr. Tudor about Students
Autumn Term	Typing up audio transcripts and data analysis started
Year 3 of Research – 2001	
Students in Year 9 – Foundation group ability setting	
First half of Spring Term	Questionnaires repeated and analysed to identify any changes in responses Interviews with 6 students including

	Mathilda
Second half of Spring Term	Interviews with remaining students Including Henry, Eleanor and William
First half of Summer Term	Observation of lessons and videos recorded including observation of William and Eleanor in Mr. Tudor's class. Lesson on effect of flight on Second World War Observation of lesson with Mathilda and Henry in Mr. Stuart's class. Lesson on effect of flight on First World War Interviews with Mathilda and Henry on understanding of lesson. Other 8 students interviewed during this period
Second half of Summer Term	Interviews with Mr. Tudor and Mr. Stuart about students and lessons learned about about ability groupings
Autumn Term	Typing up transcripts and data analysis continued

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